

# Prescot Schools

Before the late 1800s education was a privilege enjoyed by a small proportion of the population. Many towns and villages had schools but they were only accessible to children whose parents were wealthy enough to pay for their education.



Prescot Grammar School, High Street

The Elementary Education Act of 1870 established formal education for children aged 5 to 12 in England and Wales, with subsequent laws making elementary education compulsory in 1880, and free of charge in 1891. The Education Act required the establishment of local School Boards whose responsibility was to provide schools in all districts where they were needed. As a result Prescot Parish School Board was set up in 1871.

Nationally there was a significant school attendance problem, particularly with working children who brought a wage into the family, attending school would mean a reduction in the family's income. Sunday Schools were set up in 1780 to tackle this problem, the second Sunday School in the country was opened by Rev. Samuel Sewell here in Prescot. Various Factory Acts also stated that children must have some instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic.

Prior to the establishment of a School Board in Prescot, there had been a Grammar School for boys since 1544. The Grammar School has occupied 3 sites since the 16th century, with the first school situated in Church Street, opposite the Parish Church. In 1759 the school moved to what is now High Street because of *'...the narrowness of the street opposite thereto and the many wheel carriages passing therein.'* The original school building became the schoolmaster's house, latterly the Post Office and Citizens Advice Bureau.

<http://www.knowsley.gov.uk/things-to-see-and-do/galleries-and-museum.aspx>

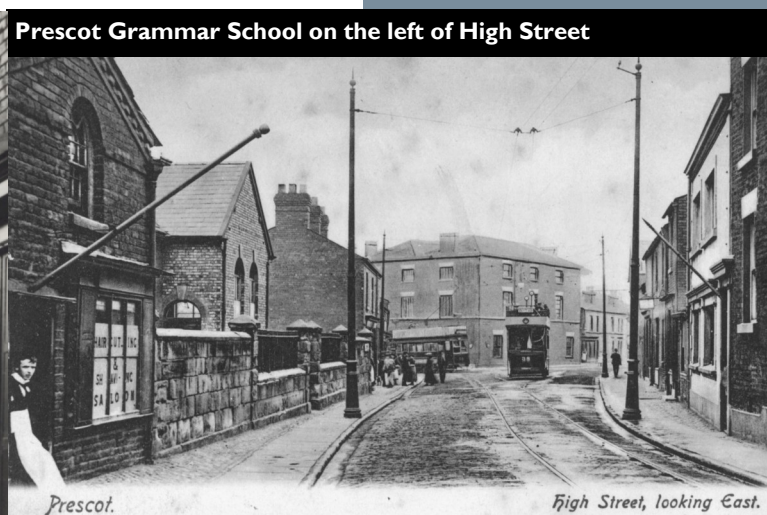
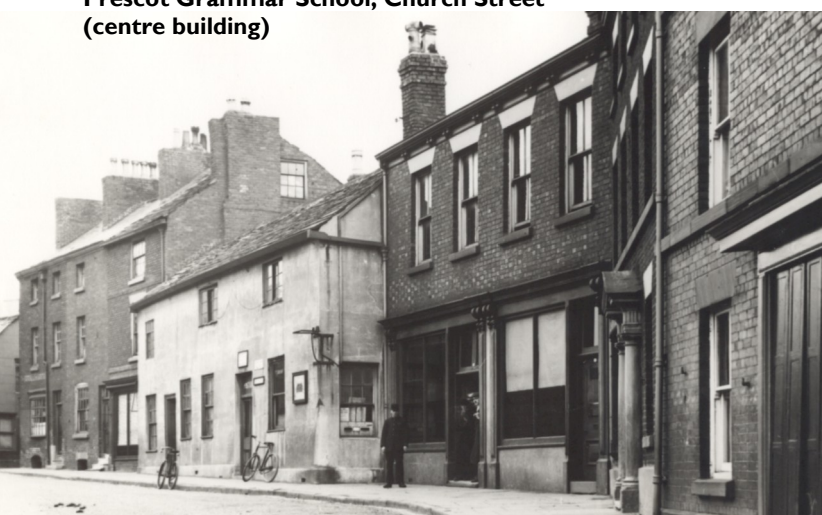
**Prescot Grammar School, Church Street**  
(centre building)



Knowsley Council

Prescot Grammar School was founded in 1544 when Gilbert Latham, Archdeacon of Man, bequeathed money in his will for the founding of a free school at Prescot. It was one of the first free schools in the country.

**Prescot Grammar School on the left of High Street**



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Between 1903 and 1923 the number of boys attending the school had risen from 40 to over 200. Additional buildings in Prescot were commandeered for the housing of lower forms, including the upper floors of the Assembly Rooms, the Wesleyan Methodist School House, and the Parish Room. The inadequate learning space meant a new building was necessary.

In the early 1920s the school acquired part of the Yew Tree Farm estate off St Helens Road from the Earl of Derby, and the new school buildings opened in 1924. The school was expanded during the 1960s, but was severely damaged by in arson attack by a former pupil.

In 1975 Prescot Grammar School became part of the comprehensive system and amalgamated with the Girl's Grammar School in Knowsley Park Lane which had been established in 1955. The Boys and Girls Grammar Schools were known as 'Lathom' and 'Parkside' wings respectively. In 1978 the majority of the buildings at the Lathom wing were destroyed by fire, this led to massive restoration, the site was eventually closed in 1994. Knowsley Park Centre for Learning now occupies the Parkside site.

Other early schools in Prescot included the Church of England school for girls and infants in Houghton Street. Roman Catholics had schools on Yew Tree Place and St Helens Road, providing accommodation for boys, girls and infants who lived within the town's boundary. The Board School for girls and boys was built on Warrington Road in 1877, it was popularly known as the 'Council School'. The Victorian school was demolished and new school premises built in Maryville Road.

The Grammar School applied for and was granted its own coat of arms. The Latin motto '*Futuram civitatem inquirimus*' translates as 'We are seeking a future state', in other words 'Looking forward'.

