



LEFT
Emanuel has a long and illustrious history

BELOW
Today the school offers superb facilities

Noble HISTORY

Emanuel School's rich four-century history provides a fascinating insight into London's growth and the development of a first-class modern education


LIBBY NORMAN

Emanuel School can trace its roots back to 1594, with a bequest for £300 – equivalent to over £30,000 today – made by Anne, Lady Dacre, widow of Gregory Fiennes, Lord Dacre of the South. It specified a property, to be called Emmanuel Hospital in Westminster, as: "a meet and convenient house...for the relief of twenty aged people and for the bringing up of twenty children in virtue and good and laudable arts". Notably, this education was designed to be co-educational from the start and was offered to ten boys and ten girls.

Lady Dacre was a lady in waiting of Elizabeth I, and it was a royal decree that ensured her bequest moved into action in 1601 with a charter of incorporation for Emanuel Hospital. This was located close to Palace Street, Westminster – then known as Tothill Fields – but the bequest had only stretched to 20 rooms so at first the building was given over to "aged people" (over 50). While each resident had the option to raise a child and give training in a craft or trade, there is little evidence this happened. By 1736, Emanuel's funding was on a stronger footing and the first pupils were admitted. It was known as Browncoat School – a reference to the uniform – and presided over by Rev. Thomas Bolton.

The school day was no picnic. Pupils had to get up at 6am, spend ten hours in the classroom and still find time for chores. The curriculum consisted of the 'three Rs' (reading, writing, maths), with girls replacing maths with needlework.

The curriculum and the school expanded in

the 19th century, reflecting the capital's rapid growth and demand for education among its burgeoning middle classes. Merger and reorganisation followed, under a scheme for London's smaller charity schools devised by the Endowed Schools Commission. While girls headed off to what became Grey Coat Hospital, the school governors secured a site for the boys in Wandsworth. Formerly Royal Patriotic Asylum, an orphanage for the sons of Crimean War veterans, this lofty modern building opened its doors in January 1883.

Emanuel's stately main building designed by Saxon Snell and gloriously long drive remain recognisable today, although that first intake of 200 boys were also greeted by a pigsty where a staffroom now stands. At first, there was a good mix of boarders, but by 1913 Emanuel had become a day school.

As the century progressed, so did facilities. One 20th-century headmaster – appropriately named Mr Broom – did much to modernise, raising both standards and the breadth of education. He also presided over the school evacuation to Petersfield, Hampshire



during WWII and its safe return. By the time he retired in 1953, Emanuel was on a firm footing as a leading London school.

After 1970s educational reform, Emanuel moved from its grammar school status to independent – in common with the entire direct grant sector. Notable alumni include inventor of the World Wide Web Sir Tim Berners-Lee, who has credited his maths teacher Francis Grundy and chemistry teacher Derek Pennell with helping to inspire his career in science.

With Elizabeth I's royal patronage instrumental in enabling the school's foundation, it seemed fitting that her descendant Queen Elizabeth II visited in 1994 to celebrate Emanuel's 400th birthday.

Girls were welcomed back in the mid 1990s, returning Emanuel to its co-ed roots. Today, over 1,000 girls and boys benefit from the leafy 12-acre setting, superb 14-acre sports site and high-ceilinged classrooms and lab spaces. While school traditions such as rowing on the Thames are cherished, so too is the pursuit of thoroughly modern academic excellence under Headmaster Robert Milne. The "good and laudable arts" of a well-rounded education, as envisaged by Anne, Lady Dacre, remain central at Emanuel. While previous generations sang her praises in the school song 'Noble Aim', her name lives on in the recently opened Dacre Arts & Humanities Centre. That 16th-century investment in London children's futures has more than paid off, not only benefitting Emanuel pupils but also many young people within the local area via its thriving access and social mobility initiatives. 17



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