**School History**

**Early nineteenth century education**

In 1818, apart from a small dame school where pupils were paid for by their families, there was only a Sunday School in Leafield, attended by some 40-50 children. The Parochial Enquiry Return of that year stated that the poor had not the means of education but were very desirous of possessing them; the Sunday School at that time was very indifferently supported through the poverty of the people. In 1831, Rev. William Williams, vicar of Leafield and the sole manager of the school, asked that the Sunday School, which was by then attended by 101 boys and 64 girls, should be united to the National Society for Promoting Religious Education.

**Establishment of a day school**

In 1838, Rev. Edward Williams put forward proposals for a daily school in Leafield. The Lord of the Manor had promised a piece on land on the Greens, on which Rev. Williams planned to build a school room and a residence for the school master and mistress. The cost was £242; apart from grants from the Treasury and the Diocesan Society for Promoting Religious Education, the funds were raised locally, some in the form of money, but more in the form of materials and labour.

The school was completed and in operation by September 1839. There was no playground provided for, so the children played on the Greens, though a small yard was added later. The schoolroom was divided into two sections, for boys and girls, taught by the master and mistress, who received a joint salary of £25. A teacher's house was built adjoining the school. In 1851 Thomas Smith, aged 56, was the Schoolmaster and his daughter, Mary Ann, aged 31 the Schoolmistress. In the early 1850's some 60-70 children attended the school daily, but the Inspector who visited the school was not impressed by the standard of achievement. The Smiths left at the end of the summer term in 1856, to be replaced by Mr Taplin and his sister, who were judged "zealous in the discharge of their duties". As the number of pupils increased the staff was enlarged by the appointment of assistant teachers, both certificated and un-certificated, and paid monitors. The school was supported initially by subscriptions from the richer local inhabitants and the children's pence. In 1888 the charge for instruction was 1d for infants and 2d for the older children.

**Enlargement of the School**

In 1856 the school was given a firmer financial footing by the award of annual government aid, though this continued to be supplemented by a voluntary public subscription, based on the rateable value of the school district. The management of the school under the control of the church was also regularised. By a scheme dated 1871 drawn up by the Education Department in Whitehall and approved by the Charity Commissioners, the land and buildings were held in trust and managed by a committee of initially consisting of Lord Churchill, William Iorns, Samuel Edelsten and George Bridges. The minute books detailing the management of the school from 1873-1978 all survive.

At first the school had served only the village of Leafield, but in 1873 the School District was enlarged to include Wychwood, Langley and Asthall. Changes were made to accommodate the larger numbers of pupils. In 1871 a new infants school and privies were built at a cost of £252 and in 1873 the master's house was converted into a mixed classroom at a cost of £50. Additional porches and privies were added in 1878 and 1886. By 1876 the official accommodation figure was recorded as 229 and the average attendance was 132. Attendance and the sum raised by the children's pence were both significantly improved when attendance was made compulsory in 1878.

In 1881 Mr George Gordon was appointed as Schoolmaster. His early years were not altogether successful. In 1887 the majority of the managers resolved to ask him to resign due to poor standards in the upper part of the school, though he was able to persuade them to reverse their decision, undertaking to make considerable improvements to the levels of attainment. This he was able to do and the subsequent reports show steady progress through the remainder of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth. His wife also worked at the school, initially on an unpaid basis and later as a paid member of staff. They gave stability and continuity of staffing to the school at a time when there was a high turnover in other members of staff. Mr Gordon finally retired in 1921, but maintained his involvement with the school when in 1924 he was appointed as a member of the Management Board.

A new Infants Classroom was built in 1897; at least ¾ of the cost being met by Mr Yapp of Lowborough House, who was subsequently to become a long standing member of the management committee and a generous benefactor of the school. The schoolyard was also extended at this time. A further major extension of the school took place in 1904 when 2 new classrooms and 3 cloakrooms were added at a cost of some £550. By that time the school roll had grown to 236.

**Council control**

On 30 September 1903 the school was transferred to the County Council on an aided basis. The management committee was restructured, with members appointed by the Parish Council and the County Council, as well as foundation managers elected by subscribers.

The school continued as an all age one well into the twentieth century.In the early 1930's the school leaving age was raised to 15 and the Director of Education in Oxford proposed a scheme for re-grouping schools with Leafield children aged 11 and above being transferred to Shipton-under-Wychwood. The Leafield School Management Board was vehemently opposed to any proposal for the transfer of its older pupils and, by appealing to the Board of Education in Whitehall, eventually managed to get the proposal to build a school at Shipton overturned. The Oxford board then put forward a proposal for the senior children to be transferred to Burford, which was again contested, the Leafield Managers arguing that if they were obliged to send the children from Leafield, they would prefer them to go to the Batt School at Witney. Leafield continued as an all-age school until after the 2nd World War.

In 1947 the County produced a long-term development plan, involving the replacement in the early 1960's of the present school by a new 3-class school for 5-11 year olds on a new plot in Leafield at a total cost of £13,300, much of the cost of which the Leafield Board would have to provide. They replied that they felt unable to shoulder such a heavy burden. They therefore asked that when the Minister of Education approved the Development plan, Leafield School's status should be changed from an Aided School to a Controlled School maintained by the Ministry of Education. The change in status took place in 1950, the Vicar and churchwardens gave permission for use of the School premises as a Controlled School and a new Board of Managers was elected.

In the course of the twentieth century as the average family became smaller, the numbers on the school roll fell. By 1978, when the school minute books end, the roll had fallen to only 52 with a teaching staff of only the Head and one other full-time teacher. However, in 1986 the school in the adjoining village of Ascott-under-Wychwood closed and the pupils were transferred to Leafield. This meant a rise in numbers and the addition of another full-time teacher.