

# Groomsport's Schools

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The pupils and teachers, 2007

A little bit of Groomsport history from



DISCOVER  
**GROOMSPORT**

# Groomsport's earliest school

The first edition of the Ordnance Survey map (6 inches to 1 mile), published in the 1830s, shows a School House on the edge of Cove Bay beach, just to the east of the stream that flows to the sea. The building does not appear in the map's second edition in the 1840s.

We know very little about this school. In 1845, when a new school was being proposed, an Inspector wrote: "There has not for 15 years at least been a good school here". In other records, around that time, the earlier school is described as both "a Fisherman School" and "a Church School".

## The First National School 1845 - 1895

This school was built immediately behind the Presbyterian church at the instigation of the minister, the Rev Isaac Mack. It was called a "National School" because it received some financial support from, and was inspected by, the National Board of Education in Dublin.



The Old School house -  
Christine Scholes

The school opened, for boys only, in 1845 with Alexander Lindsay as the school master. An additional classroom was built the next year and Master Lindsay's wife, Elizabeth, taught girls there. At that time the school had 180 pupils.

The school was very successful and, in 1886, it was said to be the biggest school in the district. By 1895, the building was judged to be too cramped and poorly lit and a new school was built.

The church converted the old school into six dwellings, which were used until the 1960s.

The drawing of the old school building is by Christine Scholes. It was drawn from the memory of her mother who had lived there.

## The Second National School 1895 - 1962

In 1895 the new school opened on Main Street, opposite the Presbyterian Church. It was built on ground that Robert Perceval-Maxwell leased to the church, for 500 years, virtually rent free. The school cost £485 to build and a further £85 was spent on internal furnishings.

This school served the needs of the children of the village until 1962. In the 1920s, under the Northern Ireland government, the school was designated a “Public Elementary School” and, in 1947, it became a “Primary School”. When the school was replaced in 1962, the building became the Presbyterian Church hall and was named for the long-serving minister at the time – Rev Walter Nelson.

The church has extended the building on a number of occasions, the latest being in 2024. However, as the photograph shows, the original rectangular school building, with gothic windows, remains at its heart.



# Groomspport Primary School 1962 - 2007

A new school, with three classrooms, was built by Down County Education Committee, in Springwell Drive, at a cost of £17,000. It was opened, on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1962, by Mrs W S Kingan JP. Sixty children transferred to the new school. The principal was Mr J N Halliday who was succeeded by Mr Robert Watson in 1983.

In late July 1996, an unexplained fire destroyed the assembly hall and a classroom and damaged a second classroom. Thanks to the hard work of the staff and others, the school re-opened as usual in September that year.



The P1 and P2 classroom destroyed in 1996. Photo: Margaret McCreedy

The number of pupils enrolled in the school decreased from 65 in 1986 to 25 in 2006. The school had taken on integrated status in 2004, but this seems to have had no effect on the numbers of pupils in the school. In December 2006 the Department of Education announced that the school would close on 31st August 2007. The building has been used as an Intensive Support Learning Unit for young people in care.

Find out more about the history of the village and Groomspport Digital Archive at: [www.discovergroomspport.com](http://www.discovergroomspport.com).  
Contact us at [discovergroomspport@gmail.com](mailto:discovergroomspport@gmail.com)



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