

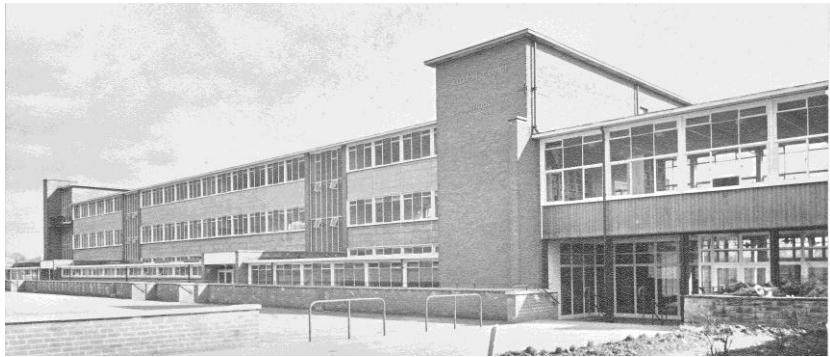
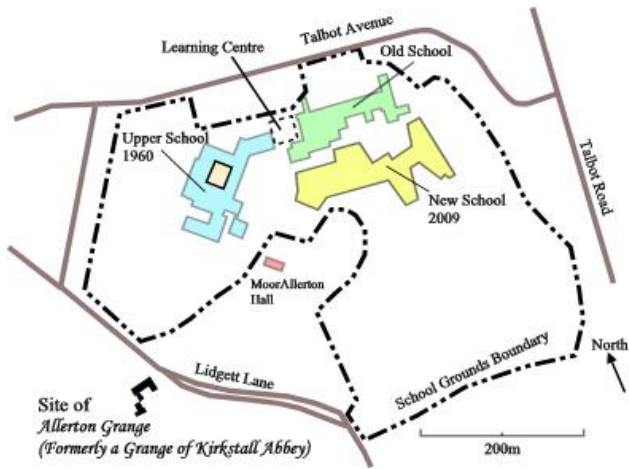
## **Allerton Grange Schools.**

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The inhabitants of Gledhow and Moortown might well have considered themselves fortunate when, some sixty years ago, Leeds City Council decided to build a new school, to be called Allerton Grange, in their neighbourhood. This was the second secondary school to be built in Leeds in the immediate post-war years. Most secondary schools were housed in old buildings that often dated back to Victorian times. It was stated that Allerton Grange School was needed to educate a large post-war natural increase in the number of children in the area. However, this was equally true of many other parts of Leeds. Perhaps, the Gledhow and Moortown area was chosen because the building of a new council housing estate to the north-west had led to such a large growth in the number of children that insufficient places were available in existing secondary modern schools.

The school occupied an almost entirely greenfield site. An exception was a building called The Bungalow; this was demolished as part of the school scheme. A gap in a line of semi-detached houses on Talbot Avenue gave the school direct access to the avenue. The site not only had room for the new Allerton Grange School building (along with its annexes), but had space in which expansion could occur and where playing fields could be laid out. In medieval times, Kirkstall Abbey had established Allerton Grange to the south of Lidgett Lane. This area is no longer farmland, and is now occupied by houses. But the medieval grange is perpetuated in the school's name.

Teaching in Allerton Grange School commenced in 1954, even though the administrative block and some specialist rooms were not then finished. The completed building was flat-roofed and a large part was three storied.



**Map showing the location of Allerton Grange School and pictures of the old and new schools.**

The first headteacher, a Mr Bradbury, found the building 'light, cheerful, and refreshing both to the eye and the spirit'. But even he had reservations about the amount of concrete and glass as this made the school cold in winter and hot in summer. The building cost £173,000 and could accommodate 680 pupils. Barely had the planned building been completed than it was decided to build a new science block and to increase the pupil intake to become a ten-form entry school. The latter decision led to a completely new building being erected, at a cost of £300,000, just to the west of the existing building that itself lay near Talbot Avenue. This extra building was completed in the academic year of 1960-61, and was used to house the upper school.

Allerton Grange opened as a secondary modern school. At that period, about 20% of children aged eleven were selected, by means of an entrance examination, to be educated in a municipal grammar school. The bulk of eleven year olds entered a non-selective secondary modern or county secondary school. Many of these were old buildings with very few facilities. However, Allerton Grange possessed the range of specialist facilities that had previously been largely restricted to grammar schools. These facilities included playing fields that were laid out in 1957-58, just to the south of the main school building. Furthermore, Mr Bradbury and his staff introduced other grammar school characteristics. The school was divided into three houses: Livingstone, Nightingale, and Shaftesbury. There were school games teams, out-of-school activities and school visits.

The education of many of the school's pupils focused upon developing practical skills albeit on rather gendered lines such as needlecraft and housecraft for girls, and metalwork and woodwork for boys. But almost from the start, the school had set its heart on developing the academic talents of at least some of its pupils by entering them for GCE

examinations. This was rather a radical move as in Leeds until 1951 only grammar school pupils had been entered for external school-leaving examinations. In 1952, Harehills became the first Leeds secondary modern school to enter pupils for GCE examinations. That this relatively nearby and former elementary school was already offering GCE courses may well have contributed to Allerton Grange's decision to run GCE courses. Whatever the full reasons, by 1958 some Allerton Grange pupils had been entered for GCE 'O' level examinations. Between 1959 and 1966 the pass rate was 51%; this was similar to that of those Leeds' secondary modern schools that entered pupils, but rather below that of Leeds' municipal grammar schools. Given its strong academic interest, it is scarcely surprising that, in 1958, the school changed from secondary modern to comprehensive. At this time, Allerton Grange was only the second comprehensive school to be found in Leeds. In 1960, Allerton Grange entered its first two candidates for GCE 'A level examinations. By 1966, 102 candidates were entered for 'A level examinations, and this was a far larger number than for any other Leeds state school. In that year, Allerton Grange achieved a pass rate of 57%.

A reorganisation of schools in Leeds in 1972 led the original school building to become a middle school (for pupils aged between 9 and 13) and the former upper school became a high school. Another reorganisation occurred in 1992 when the school reverted to an 11 to 18 comprehensive, which it still is today.

However, by September 2009 a new building to house the school had been erected, and in 2009-10 the old school buildings were demolished. A pre-2009 building remains that houses adult learning. The re-building of the school was a result of a central government policy to improve school buildings. Funding for the new school building was made available through the Private

Finance Initiative. The new building again has much glass and parts are of three storeys. It is larger and its roof is more varied than the original building.

Certainly, it is a handsome building, and its design may encourage pupils to attend school. However, in itself the building is unlikely to have a major effect on pupils' progress. Other influences, including teachers, are more important. In this context, it is interesting to note that a number of aspects of school life are, rightly or wrongly, rooted in mid-twentieth century municipal grammar schools. One such feature is pupils being expected to wear school uniform. Another is that, whilst pupils are no longer placed in a particular form on the basis of their apparent abilities, pupils are still classified. Now they are placed into subject sets, initially on the basis of their year six SATS results. Furthermore, a large part of the programme of study is academic and there is a wide range of extra-curricular activities. There is, of course, a sixth form. External examinations are a major part of school life. But at least, all pupils now have a chance to gain qualifications: an opportunity that was denied to many pupils fifty years ago.

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