

Scotland Street School



Self-Led Tour

Scotland Street Public School was designed by the iconic Glasgow architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh for the School Board of Glasgow between 1903 and 1906. This self-led tour will guide you round the Museum and provide information on aspects of the building and exhibits that is not provided by the displays. We hope you enjoy your visit to the museum.

Ground Floor

Mackintosh had to take into account the Standard School Requirements of the time in his architecture, as well as creating a design capable of accommodating 1250 children. These included: separate playgrounds; outside toilets; separate staircases for boys, girls and infants; teachers' rooms on each floor; electric lighting; a cookery room and the drill hall.

The three entrances of the building were for boys on the far left, infants through the central door, and girls on the right. The entrance is flanked by two small trees. A central cluster of five triangles sits in a seven by seven grid of squares to form the canopy – this pattern is repeated throughout the building.

As you arrive through the main entrance you will find yourself in the **Drill Hall**.

The vast open space of the Hall would have been daunting, particularly for a five-year old pupil on their first day of school, and so the infants' entrance was intentionally designed to be small as the children were ushered in. The children would have marched into the hall two by two accompanied by the playing of the piano, which can be found on the Mezzanine level. They would have been faced by six white towers topped with green tiles – often interpreted as Mackintosh's vision of a forest of trees.

After the Drill Hall had been bricked in and used as an air raid shelter during World War 11, the hall was converted into a gymnasium with wall bars and other equipment included in this conversion. The refurbishment of the 1990s reinstated the original use of the Hall, with the use of open windows allowing light to pervade through the corridors and surrounding areas. The '90s works were divided into the refurbishment of the Mackintosh designs using materials and skills of the time, and the 'Mockintosh' upgrades which incorporated modern materials and skills. This is seen in the contrasting hand-painted tiles in the drill hall and their obviously new counterparts, although the parquet floor is of the same design and colour scheme as the original.

As you walk along the corridor to the right you will find the **Temporary Exhibition Gallery** which was created by removing the partitions that divided three classrooms, and the **Audio Visual Room**, which will play a selection of children's and old fashioned films. The **lift** can be found directly across from this room.

FIRST FLOOR

As you travel up the **Girls' Staircase** on the right of the building you'll notice the stairwell windows, which incorporate one of Art Nouveau and Mackintosh's key ideas, the *Tree of Knowledge*. The blue (symbolizing purity) leaded glass oval can be interpreted as a seed, the three leaded lines its stylized *hilum* – the visible groove of the seed that is visible when it detaches from the parent plant. This, according to some, symbolises the growth of the children as they gain knowledge and independence. Similarly, the green triangular panes of glass at the top of the window are thought to represent the bloom of the seed as it grows, acting as a metaphor for the journey through schooldays.

The **Thistle Room** is now a private staff room. The **Activities Room** can be found opposite, and a number of arts and crafts activities are held here for the entertainment of young visitors.

The **Scotland Street School Room** is a set exhibition of the materials and memoirs of past students. **Mackintosh and Scotland Street Room** is also a fixed exhibition, which delves into the architecture and context of the school.

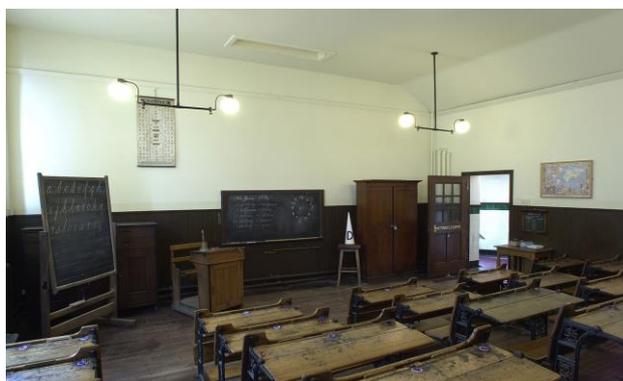
SECOND FLOOR

The **Girls' Cloak Room** still has the original sinks, which you'll notice have no taps, as the janitor controlled the flow of water during break and lunchtime. The pipes under the coat rails were a key part of the cloak room, as they dried the children's wet coats after they had walked to school in the typically Scottish weather. Here, there are costumes for the Victorian and World War 11 periods to be used at your leisure.

The **Cookery Room** still houses some of Mackintosh's original furniture. This room would have been used almost solely by female students until the '70s, as domestic science was widely considered as more appropriate women's work than the boys' technical skills class.

The **Boys' Cloakroom** is of a similar format to the girls', and has the appropriate period attire.

The **Victorian Classroom** is equipped with all the conventional Victorian equipment including inkwell, quarry slates in wood frames, and slate pencils, which were often sharpened on the school wall. Children were supposed to bring a dampened cloth to school with them to wipe clean their slate; however, most wouldn't bother and just used their spit and cuff of their sleeve. This process is the origin of the phrase *'to wipe the slate clean'* – to have a fresh start!



The brutal punishments of the Victorian era have been stopped. The Dunce Cap was an example of this. It was put upon a misbehaving or unintelligent pupil in order to embarrass them and simultaneously funnel knowledge into the head of the wearer (because of the conical shape of the cap). Even more excruciating punishments were the cane and belt, which the teachers used liberally to keep misbehaving or unprepared children in line.



Next door to the Victorian room is the **World War 11 Classroom**. On entering the room you will see the collection of cardboard boxes that would have held the children's individual gas masks – a necessity for air raid drills, evacuation preparation and the real air raids that were a part of everyday life for the pupils.

38 million gas masks were handed out during the Second World War, but no gas attack ever took place.

The 'Evacuation List' and spelling exercise on the blackboards emphasise the constant threat of war and its inclusion in every part of school life. Boys and girls were still in separate classes – the boys had mapping and woodwork classes while the girls practiced sewing. Boys and girls were taught to knit to support the war effort- to raise money, for those who had been bombed out of their houses and for the soldiers.

School Days Exhibition is set with a walkthrough of school life of the past, starting at the desk of the stern headmaster. With detailed memoirs, memorabilia and interactive exhibits,

this emphasises the enormous change that the Scottish educational system has gone through, in terms of teaching style and attitude.

The **'50s/'60s Classroom** has a radically different style from the dark wooded Victorian and WWII rooms, as the teaching style moved away from the hostile authoritarian nature of the classes, and became more relaxed and informal. The repetition of knowledge that made up most of the previous lessons had been changed to focus on the development of skill as well as acquisition of knowledge, something that has continued into modern practise. Although classes were now co-educational, the girls were still taught domestic science as the boys were taught technical skills.



An important feature of those days (in terms of arithmetic) was the imperial system for money (shillings, farthings, halfpennies etc.) and measurement (quarts, gallons, acres, furlongs etc.). The problems on the board are virtually impossible without knowledge of this system, and have proven to be tricky for the modern visitor.

THE PLAYGROUND.

The area at the front of the school was the infants' playground, and was segregated. The central structure in front of the gates was the outhouse – the toilets for the infants. The brick house at the left of the school as you exit was the Janitor's home and was originally designed to have a central tower in keeping with the school itself. It was customary for the school janitor to live on site with his family, but rules made it very clear that he was not allowed lodgers.

The playground behind the school was also segregated with an iron railing into the boys' and girls' area. Outside toilets for boys and girls were situated at the very bottom end of the playground. They would have been foul-smelling, non-flushing and without toilet-paper. One of the Janitor's unpleasant jobs would be to flush out the urinals on a daily basis.

Why did the school close?

Kingston, the catchment area for the school, was largely populated by skilled heavy industry workers from the nearby docks and industrial yards. The decline of these industries and the birth of the M8 motorway and Kingston Bridge signalled the death knell for this area, and the tenements were demolished to make way for the M8. By 1979 the school's population had fallen to just 89 pupils, a tiny fraction of the 1250 in attendance in 1906. This building was preserved because of its artistic integrity, and escaped the bulldozer.

We hope you will continue to enjoy the museum. Feel free to ask any of the gallery assistants in the museum for further information regarding the displays and exhibits.