

Sandhurst Industrial School

1868 – 1885

Other Names:

- Sandhurst Industrial School
- Boys' Industrial School, Sandhurst

Details

The Sandhurst Industrial School was established in 1868, within the grounds of the Bendigo (or Sandhurst) Benevolent Asylum. The *Neglected and Criminal Children's Act* 1864 allowed for the establishment of private industrial schools. There were 3 private industrial schools in Victoria, the other two (in Geelong and Abbotsford) were Catholic institutions.

Neglected children had been housed at the Bendigo Benevolent Asylum since it was founded in 1860. In 1868 The Board of the Asylum applied to the government to establish an industrial school in one wing of the Asylum “as a means of improving their general source of revenue. The Board’s successful application argued that local children in need should be looked after locally thus gaining 8 shillings and 6 pence for child maintenance per week without having to take on many extra staff or a Superintendent” (Chinese Rural Victoria blog, 2009).

In the 1869 annual report of the Department of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, the Inspector wrote that “The school at Sandhurst under the care of the committee of the Benevolent Asylum I found at all times in a most efficient state, the children well attended to and carefully instructed”.

The Royal Commission on Penal and Prison Discipline’s 1872 report about industrial schools reported that on the 30 June 1872, there were 147 girls living at Sandhurst Industrial School. The Commissioners wrote about Sandhurst in largely favourable terms, saying that there was no doubt that “both as regards their present condition and their future prospects, the children brought up in it are more favorably circumstanced than they would have been if they had passed through any of the pauper schools”. They observed that being under the supervision of a local committee (rather than a centralised government department) was a major reason behind Sandhurst’s relative success, compared with the conditions at other industrial schools.

This school is a local institution, and is under local control, although it is subsidized and inspected by the Government. The experience drawn from its history goes far to illustrate the advantages enumerated in the preceding paragraph; nor can there be the slightest doubt that, both as regards their present condition and their future prospects, the children brought up in it are more favorably circumstanced than they would have been if they had passed through any of the pauper schools.

Following the Royal Commission on Penal and Prison Discipline, the Victorian government introduced a boarding out system, however children remained in industrial schools like Sandhurst.

The 1878 annual report of the Department of Industrial and Reformatory Schools stated that Sandhurst had lately received many transfers from Sunbury, indicating that by this time Sandhurst was an institution for boys. The Superintendent’s report for 1878 stated that Sandhurst had started the year with 64 children and ended with 88. The average period of residence was 6 months 21 days.

In the 1879 annual report, Sandhurst was described as an industrial school for boys, with 125 “inmates” (and having accommodation for up to 150). It continued to be run by a local committee, and received a sum from the government for the maintenance of each child in the School. Its residents were both Catholic and Protestant. The acting Inspector wrote that “the time has arrived when a change, should, I think, be made. At the time it was established accommodation was needed. This is no longer the case, and the children can very shortly be accommodated in the Royal Park without necessitating any increase in the cost of the staff, and consequently for a less sum than the Government is now paying”. The report noted however, that “the Sandhurst people do not wish the School broken up”.

The Superintendent of the Boys’ Industrial School Sandhurst reported in 1881 that there were 88 children at the school at the end of 1880. The health of the boys was favourable and the educational instruction “continues to be imparted with marked zeal and efficiency”. In early 1883 there was a “rather serious outbreak of ophthalmia and related complaints” at Sandhurst. The numbers at Sandhurst were reduced in 1883 by boarding out and “by licensing out under school conditions” – the numbers went from 100 down to 43 children. The 1884 report to the Department from the Superintendent of Sandhurst noted that a large number of boys had been discharged for service and boarding out. The school was opened as a state school in April that year, however the teachers had been “laboring under great disadvantages”. Twenty one boys had absconded (all were returned by the police shortly after). There were 39 boys at the school at the end of 1884.

The Sandhurst Industrial School finally closed on 20 April 1885.

A copy of the Bendigo Benevolent Asylum Industrial School Children’s Register 1868 – 1885 is held at the Bendigo Family History Library (call number BEN 308).

The State Library of Victoria holds annual reports of the Committee of Management of the Bendigo Benevolent Asylum, some of these include the annual report of the Sandhurst Industrial School.

Gallery



The Bendigo Benevolent Asylum and Industrial School

More info

Related Entries

Related Legislation

- [The Neglected and Criminal Children's Act 1864, Victoria \(1864 - 1888\)](#)

The Bendigo Benevolent Asylum Industrial School was established under the provisions of the Neglected and Criminal Children's Act 1864.

Resources

- Victoria. Royal Commission on Penal and Prison Discipline., [Report \(No.3\) of the Royal Commission on Penal and Prison Discipline: Industrial and Reformatory Schools](#), 1872

- [The Sanitary Condition of Industrial Schools](#), The Argus, 1 April 1872

Records

For more information and to access your records, follow the links below:

Records

- [Victorian Government Wardship and/or Out of Home Care Records \(1864 - current\)](#)
- [Children's Registry, Bendigo Industrial School \(1868 - 1885\)](#)

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