

THE 'HIGHER GRADE' SCHOOL

1907 - 1928

The Education (Scotland) Act 1872 which led to the construction of Portobello Board/Burgh School made schooling compulsory only from ages 5 to age 13.

The leaving age was increased to 14 in 1901.

The school applied for – and obtained – ‘Higher Grade’ status in time for the start of the school year in September 1907. Pupils who had completed the qualifying examination could now extend their schooling beyond the end of the compulsory period of education required by law.

New accommodation was necessary and a second storey comprising a number of science and art rooms was added to the original wing facing Niddrie Road (now Duddingston Park). This opened in December 1908.

Until 1928 the school catered only for pupils up to third year; pupils wishing to continue their education beyond that stage had to transfer to Broughton or Leith Academy. However in that year the school was regraded to secondary status, and was given the new title “Portobello Secondary” which remained in use until 1975.

The images shown are all ‘posed’ for a plate camera (at the time exposures of a couple of seconds would have been required). Each is labelled ‘Portobello H.G. School’. The science and art rooms are clearly in an upper storey, which places the date between December 1908 and achieving secondary status in 1928.

The girls’ fashion suggests the earlier part of that window – added to which the joinery classroom is somewhat pristine, perhaps never used.

The photos may have been taken to advertise the school’s new status and facilities, or for archival purposes. The school log book for the period makes no reference to them being taken.

1932 Link with
Dunedin, New Zeala



Art Class

Joinery Class



Girls' Science
Class