

St Patrick's Orphan School

1840 – 1845?

Details

St Patrick's Orphan School was established at Windsor in September 1840. It was run by a private management committee in association with St Matthew's Catholic Church, Windsor. At its official opening in October 1840 there were seven children in residence, with 20 children in the school by June 1841. The closing date of St Patrick's Orphan School is not known.

Although St Patrick's Orphan School was run on Catholic principles, it did not aim to accept exclusively Catholic children from the Windsor district. In a letter appealing to supporters published in the *Australasian Chronicle* in March 1841, the local Reverend reports that he had taken three children from the Protestant Orphan School at Paramatta, and placed them at St Patricks. He emphasises that the school "is not for Windsor alone, or the children of the Windsor district... it will be open to all, without any distinction of creed, district, or country."

The rules and regulations of the home, published in the *Australasian Chronicle* in March 1842, stated that any child who had lost both parents could be admitted to the home, and children who had a single living parent could be recommended to the home by members of the committee or supporters of the home. If the parent was able to work, they were required to pay a maintenance fee for each child living at St Patricks. The rules also stated that girls admitted to the home were not to leave the school for domestic service placements until they were able to read, write, and understand basic arithmetic.

On 19th April 1842 the Orphan School was evacuated during a rainstorm due to rising floodwaters threatening the school. Although the school did not flood, it did sustain damage during the storm, requiring the children to live temporarily in an empty ward at the Windsor Colonial Hospital. They returned to the Orphan School on the 9th June 1842.

The closing date of St Patrick's Orphan school is not known. The last known reference to the school is an article published in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1845, which was appealing to readers for donations to enable the Orphan School to accommodate more children. It is possible that the school closed shortly after this appeal.

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