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## **Formation of national identity of the young generation, in the conditions of emigration in the Polish School of Native Subjects named after Our Lady of Czestochowa in London**

**Kształtowanie tożsamości narodowej młodego pokolenia w warunkach emigracji w Polskiej Szkole Przedmiotów Ojczyźnych im. Matki Boskiej Częstochowskiej w Londynie**

### **Abstract**

**Introduction.** The purpose of this article is to introduce the history of the School of Homeland Subjects of Our Lady of Czestochowa in London and to draw attention to the mission that guided its activities over the years, i.e.: the propagation of Polish culture, religious education and catechization of children and youth in exile. The research problem of this article concerns the various forms of didactic and educational work of the school of native subjects in the field of native education of children and youth, which was based on close cooperation of teachers with parents and the Polish community.

**Aim.** The purpose of the article is to present the history of the Matka Boska Czestochowska School of Native Subjects and its activities didactic and educational over 60 years, the role of teachers and parents in raising children in Polish culture and tradition.

**Methods and materials.** In order to achieve the research problem, the method of document analysis and the method of analysis and criticism of literature were used.

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**Results.** The result of the research is the presentation of the history and organizational forms of didactic and educational work at the Mother of God of Czestochowa School of Native Subjects, such as the management and leadership of the institution, the organization of the didactic and educational process, cooperation with the family and social environment, among others.

**Conclusion.** The Polish School of Native Subjects named after Our Lady of Czestochowa in London on Devonian Road, for several decades of its activity, shaped the national identity of Polish children and youth, nurtured Polish traditions, passed on cultural and religious heritage, participating in the celebration of national holidays and patriotic celebrations, etc. The teaching staff engaged in didactic and educational work, both in the form of classroom and extracurricular activities. Students were encouraged to participate in various competitions, exhibitions and academies. In addition, from the very beginning the school worked closely with the Parents' Committee and the parish, who supported the work of teachers and helped manage the institution. Despite the many difficulties of the premises and frequent changes of school premises, the slogan was tirelessly implemented: "Polish speech at home, in the Polish school and church."

**Keywords:** native education, native subject schools, parents, child, school.

### Abstrakt

**Wprowadzenie.** Celem artykułu jest przybliżenie historii Szkoły Przedmiotów Ojczystych im. Matki Boskiej Częstochowskiej w Londynie oraz zwrócenie uwagi na misję, która przyświecała jej działalności przez lata: krzewienie kultury polskiej, wychowanie religijne i katechizacja dzieci i młodzieży na emigracji. Problematyka badawcza niniejszego artykułu dotyczy różnorodnych form pracy dydaktyczno-wychowawczej w tej szkole w zakresie wychowania ojczystego dzieci i młodzieży, która opiera się na ścisłym współdziałaniu nauczycieli z rodzicami i społecznością polonijną.

**Cel.** Celem artykułu jest zaprezentowanie historii Szkoły Przedmiotów Ojczystych im. Matki Boskiej Częstochowskiej oraz jej działalności dydaktyczno-wychowawczej na przestrzeni 60 lat oraz roli nauczycieli i rodziców w wychowywaniu dzieci w polskiej kulturze i tradycji.

**Metody i materiały.** Aby zrealizować cel badawczy, zastosowano metodę analizy dokumentów oraz metodę analizy i krytyki piśmiennictwa.

**Wyniki.** Rezultatem przeprowadzonych badań jest przedstawienie historii i form organizacji pracy dydaktyczno-wychowawczej w Szkole Przedmiotów Ojczystych im. Matki Boskiej Częstochowskiej. Są to m.in. zarządzanie i kierownictwo placówką, organizacja procesu dydaktyczno-wychowawczego, współpraca ze środowiskiem rodzinnym i społecznym.

**Wnioski.** Polska Szkoła Przedmiotów Ojczystych im. Matki Boskiej Częstochowskiej w Londynie na Devonian Road przez kilkadziesiąt lat swej działalności kształtowała tożsamość narodową dzieci i młodzieży polonijnej, pielęgnowała polskie tradycje, przekazywała dziedzictwo kulturowe i religijne. Uczniowie uczestniczyli w obchodach świąt narodowych, kościelnych, w uroczystościach patriotycznych itp. Grono nauczycielskie angażowało się w pracę dydaktyczno-wychowawczą zarówno w formie zajęć lekcyjnych, jak i pozalekcyjnych. Zachęcano uczniów do uczestnictwa w różnego rodzaju konkursach, wystawach i akademiach. Ponadto szkoła od samego początku ściśle współpracowała z Komitetem Rodzicielskim i parafią, które wspierały pracę nauczycieli i pomagały w kierowaniu placówką. Pomimo wielu trudności lokalowych i częstych zmian siedziby szkoły niestrudzenie realizowano hasło „Mowa polska w domu, w polskiej szkole i kościele”.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wychowanie ojczyznie, szkoły przedmiotów ojczyznych, rodzice, dziecko, szkoła.

## Introduction

The bond with the Homeland is a mystery that we can define as a law of nature, the most fundamental and sacred of all natural rights. A law that must be respected by all! But we must also respect it, and we must do so in the spirit of love, which unceasingly connects us with God and through God with people.

(Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński) (in: Podhorodecka, 2003, p. 9).

The upbringing of children in emigration, the shaping of their national identity, the maintenance of the connection with Polish tradition, culture, and native language as well as religious upbringing was and is a very difficult task and requires the involvement not only of the family but also of relevant institutions (Zamecka-Zalas, 2022b). The problem of educational care for the youngest generation, which found itself in emigration after the end of the Second World War, became one of the most serious tasks of the institutions established for this purpose and of the whole society in emigration. There was an awareness of the responsibilities towards children and young people deprived of access to a Polish school. In the post-war period, this issue did not only concern the educational aspect. According to Rafał Habielski, “[...] the Polish school was necessary for the continuation of education by young people who usually did not know foreign languages, Polish education ensured the maintenance of ties with Polishness and was understood as a factor that would hinder or even prevent the young generation from dissolving into foreignness” (Habielski, 1999, p. ). For this reason, efforts were made to organise Polish education in all countries where Polish children and young people found themselves. Educational care was extended to Polish children in, among others, Persia, India, Lebanon, Africa, Mexico, and the United Kingdom. Because children were obliged to attend school in their countries of settlement, the solution that was considered the best and quite commonly applied was the so-called “Saturday schooling.” It consisted of non-compulsory education covering mainly language, literature, Polish history, and religion (Radzik, 1986). The ethos of Polish schools of native subjects was based on patriotic values passed down in families from generation to generation, according to which the homeland was treated as the highest good for which Poles were able to sacrifice their lives (Zamecka-Zalas, 2022b).

In the area of Great Britain, Polish schools for native subjects were initially established on the initiative of parents and priests from Polish parishes to bring up children in the national culture and tradition, as well as to preserve the Catholic faith. Until the 1950s, these schools were created spontaneously, at a rapid pace, in almost all Polish communities, independently of each other and without any coordination of activities by central social organisations. Since 1947, Polish education had been subordinate to the Minister of Education and the Secretary of State for Scotland, who set up the Committee for the Education of Poles in the UK in the same year. Since 1954, the Polish education system began to take shape. This was brought about by the abolition of the Committee for the Education of Poles in Great Britain. From then on, the organisation and coordination of the activities of Saturday schools passed into the hands of émigré institutions and associations. In 1954, the School Inspectorate was established based on an agreement concluded with the Association of Polish Combatants (Kondracki, 1996), the Association of Polish Teachers Abroad and the Polish Educational Society. This agreement had a positive impact on the functioning of Saturday schooling over several decades (Podhorodecka, 2003; Howe, 2016).

*Polska Macierz Szkolna* (PMS) [the Polish Educational Society] (established in 1953) had great merit in sustaining the idea of Saturday schools in the UK. Its president was Władysław Donigiewicz and the chairman of the Council was General Władysław Anders. The basic aims of the PMS included caring for the development of school and out-of-school education, the deepening of religious and national awareness, and education in the spirit of national culture (Goławski, 1956).

The details of school organisation and the forms of cooperation with parents were different for each school but were based on the same assumptions. The structure of the school was formed by the Parents' Committee, headed by its board of trustees, in addition to the teaching staff and the head of the establishment. The parents were the backbone of the school and a very big help in running it, especially in applying for funds. They organised a rich cultural and entertainment programme for this purpose. The Parents' Committee were transformed over time into Parents' Committee, i.e., *Koła Polskie Macierzy Szkolnej* [Polish School Matriculation Associations]. They thus brought together not only parents but also all Poles in emigration who wanted to get involved in helping Polish Saturday schools (Zamecka-Zalas, 2022b).

### **Origin of the school and organisational framework**

The Polish School of Native Subjects named after Our Lady of Czestochowa at the Devonia parish in London was founded in 1950 by priest Narcyz Turulski. It was not

the first Polish school at this parish. It first housed a nursery founded by the Sisters of the Nazareth in 1905 (Adamiak-Pawelec, 2012) (there is not much data about the nursery except that it existed. It was probably closed down during the First World War). The nursery at the Catholic Mission in London was reopened on May 27, 1935, by Father Theodore Cichos. By then the Mission had a newly purchased house and parish church in the Islington area. The number of children varied from 10 to 16. Lessons were held twice weekly – Mondays and Saturdays – and lasted two hours each. The nursery was supported, among others, by Mrs Andrzejewska, a Polish woman living in England, who funded meals for the pupils. The children were given tea, milk, bread rolls, sweets, biscuits, or bananas. The first caretaker of the school was Mrs Wanda Poznańska, wife of the Polish consul, who paid the teacher. In 1938, 16 children attended the school, which was taught in two groups. The older one was led by Rector Władysław Staniszewski and the younger one by Miss Jordanówna. After the outbreak of the Second World War, the children were evacuated from London to the province and the school ceased to exist. The church of the Polish Catholic Mission became a centre of religious and social life for civilian and military leaders as well as soldiers, airmen and sailors. In 1942, a house adjacent to the Mission and the church was acquired and this enabled the Rector to open the Polish Soldier's House: a hostel and canteen for Polish soldiers staying in London (O'Driscoll, 2000).

After the Second World War, when tens of thousands of Polish political refugees arrived in London, it became impossible for most Poles to return to their homeland as a result of Poland's incorporation under the influence of Soviet Russia. Furthermore, demobilised soldiers from Italy and Germany arrived in the UK. Many thousands of compatriots decided to remain in Britain and chose to live in emigration (O'Driscoll, 2000). As a new generation emerged, the provision of an education system for children and young people became a priority. Lack of funds, premises and teachers meant that Polish schools were almost non-existent in the first years after the war.

In 1950, Father N. Turulski resumed the Polish school at the church and established the Polish School of Native Subjects named after Our Lady of Czestochowa, which he sponsored for two years. Lessons were held on Saturdays in the parish halls located in the basement of the church. Initially, there were a few children, but after a year there were already 36. The first teacher was Mrs Julia Masłoń, and the parish priest taught religion. Lessons were held on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., hence the school was called the Saturday School on Devonian. In January 1953, a Parents' Committee was formed to deal with matters of school funding. Mieczysław Radoń became the first president. When the Polish Educational Society Abroad (PMSZ) was founded in 1953, the Parents' Committee passed a resolution at its general meeting to join the organisation. The school grew rapidly and by the end of 1953, 126 children were studying in four classes and a kindergarten. Some lessons were taught at the nearby English Catholic school St. Joh-

n's, as the children did not fit into the parish halls. Polish language, history, Polish geography, singing as well as dancing and religion were taught at the school (O'Driscoll, 2010). The schooling of native subjects was preceded by a kindergarten, where children between the ages of 3 and 5 were admitted (Zamecka-Zalas, 2018). Schooling started at the age of 5 years. It was divided into levels: elementary for younger children aged 5–6 years, elementary for older children aged 6–7 years, middle level for children aged 9–11 years, and higher level for children aged 11–13 years (*Program nauki w szkołach* [Curriculum for native subjects...], 1955).

Due to the growing number of pupils, the Parents' Committee decided in 1955 to build its school. They started to raise money for this purpose. Plays, bazaars, academies, and concerts were organised. Mr Paweł Szlosarek, one of the parents, ran the school shop in the basement of the church. The proceeds were divided between the needs of the church and the school. In 1956, a class for non-Polish-speaking children was opened. Pre-school, primary, and junior high school classes were also in operation and the school continued to expand (O'Driscoll, 2010).

After nine years of raising money, the parish purchased a house at 20 Devonian Road in 1964, which housed a nursery and library, pupils from two grammar school classes, and held scout meetings. Tenants lived in several rooms. The house was overseen by the Parents' Committee. When St John's English School gave notice, the children had to fit into the church buildings. Some classes were moved to Islington Green English School. In the 1980s, lessons continued to be taught in three buildings: in rooms at the church, in a house on Devonian Road and Islington Green. After 35 years, the partnership with the Polish school was terminated and the use of the classrooms was refused. However, as a result of intensive efforts by Parents' Committee President Maria Gabrielczyk and Head of School Barbara O'Driscoll, in 2001 Islington Borough made the Islington Arts and Media School building in the Finsbury Park area available for one year. In 2002 the school's premises became Finchley Catholic High School and since 2008 Greig City Academy in High Street, Hornsey, N8 7NU (Adamiak-Pawelec, 2012).

### **School activity**

The school has been very active since its inception in cooperation with the Parents' Committee and the parish. The teachers were constantly improving their workshops by taking an active part in academic conferences. The first conference of Saturday school teachers was organised in 1954 at the school in Devonian. It was convened by the Committee for the Teaching of Native Subjects of the Committee for the Education of Poles in Great Britain. The conference was attended by more than 75 people

from 30 Polish centres. The conference discussed various problems concerning how to provide universal education and how to encourage a child at home to speak Polish. Correspondence teaching was considered and a sample lesson involving children was demonstrated (O'Driscoll, 2000). Conferences on Devonian were held for many years. They were organised by the Polish Educational Society and the Polish Veterans Association. They usually lasted one day. The conferences were not only attended by teachers but also by parents of children attending Saturday schools. The most important topic of each conference was always the same – how to prevent the renationalisation of the children of the youth, what to do to keep the children Polish. The journal *Dziennik Polski* published articles full of advice and suggestions on national and religious upbringing (O'Driscoll, 2000).

After school, the children participated in extracurricular activities. Mr Magiera led the Altar Boys Club, and Mrs Budzinowska the Eucharistic Crusade club. There were also children's rosary circles, a choir, an orchestra, and scouting. Scouting at the school began in the 1950s when a group of *Krakowianki* girls was founded at the school, who later changed their name to *Mazowszanki*. In 1955, the first assembly of the *Jedynka* scout team was held. In the same year, the *Warta* team was established. Subsequently, two scout strains were created: for boys the *Podhale* and for girls – *Wielkopolska*. There were teams and groups attached to the strains. There was also a Scout troop – *Polne Ludki* for children aged 5–7. Most of the members of the scout troops attended the Polish Saturday School in Devonian. Some of the requirements for the grades were discussed in lessons. As well as attending Saturday assemblies, Scouts also went on camps, summer camps, winter camps, camping trips and international Scout rallies, such as to Canada (O'Driscoll, 2000, p. 57). Scouting played a very important role in awakening national consciousness, as it was treated by children as a pastime rather than a forced activity. Based on Adam Asnyk's poem *Do młodych*, Scoutmaster Ignacy Płonka addressed a proclamation to scouts concerning the purpose of their work in emigration:

We must go forward with the living  
 To reach for a new life  
 And not to put your head in a withered leaf.  
 – *To the young*, A. Asnyk

If we think sensibly about the purpose of Scouting work in emigration, we conclude that we face the following problems:

1. The emigration is prolonged, and who knows whether it will not fall to us to remain longer than we had supposed in emigration, so in the interim we need to move to a long-term programme.
2. The older generation is Polish and will remain Polish, they just need to be

mobilised so as not to waste any individual, to avoid anything that might divide us [...].

3. The efforts of the older generation of scouts have to go towards saving every young Polish soul born outside of Poland from denationalization. Every Polish child must be a Pole. We have wasted too much Polish blood to once again feed foreign nationalities with our blood.

This is the main task of the generation living outside Poland. It depends on us, [...] whether we perform this task and can show the next generation the will to fight for freedom [...]. (*Archiwum Instytutu Polskiego i Muzeum gen. Sikorskiego, sygn. Kol. 446/1* [Archives of the Polish Institute and General Sikorski Museum. London. Collection: Polish Scouting Association, Ref. Kol. 446/1]).

The purpose of scouting was the upbringing of brave, righteous people, capable of making sacrifices, by the Scout Promise and the Scout Law, and preparing young people for conscious, active and self-sacrificing service to God, Poland and their neighbours (Zamecka-Zalas, 2022a). One of the ideological elements of scouting upbringing was national and religious upbringing, which a scout had to pass within the framework of so-called “attempts” to obtain a specific scout rank. The requirements for specific attempts were adapted to the age of children and young people (*Archiwum Instytutu Polskiego i Muzeum gen. Sikorskiego, sygn. Kol. 446/1* [Archives of the Polish Institute and General Sikorski Museum. London. Collection: Polish Scouting Association, Ref. Kol. 446/1]; Bednarski, 1977).

The school participated every year in the May 3rd celebrations organised by the Polish Educational Society in Westminster Hall and at the Polish Social and Cultural Centre [POSK], and pupils visited exhibitions at the Polish Institute and the General Sikorski Museum in London. These exhibitions always featured a lot of “Devonian” children’s work – notebooks, newspapers, and drawings (O’Driscoll, 2010). The school supported the activities of the “Syrena [Siren]” theatre, which was established in 1958, and pupils took part in performances. They staged, for example, a nativity play and were involved in preparing special events (Nowak-Uklejska, 1978).

Theatre was a successful form of passing on national traditions:

When an emigrant child sees and hears on the stage in native speech and emotionally conveyed the most interesting moments of native history, figures of great Poles embodied on the stage, colourful national customs, Polish tales and legends – they will cease to feel like a Cinderella in contact with another culture and will not be so easily absorbed (Hęciak, 1984, p. 3).



The school flourished in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Many people contributed to its development with their sacrificial work, and many names have remained forever associated with the school. It is difficult to mention them all. As already mentioned, the first president of the Parents' Committee was Mr M. Radoń. When he left in 1964, after 13 years of service, due to ill health, he was replaced by Mr Behnke, who worked sacrificially for the school for many years. Mrs Sophie Coughlan gave singing lessons at the school but was also an organist at the church. Teachers worked at the school only for reimbursement of their commuting expenses, and even so, this sum was reduced in 1959 as a result of small receipts and rising costs. None of the teachers resigned because of this (O'Driscoll, 2000). The school fee was the same for all families, regardless of the number of children. The idea was that as many children as possible should have access to Polish language learning. The school's slogan was: "Polish speech at home, in the Polish school and church."

In January 1965, the parish priest N. Turulski. This was a great blow to the school as it lost its founder and mentor. He was buried in St. Patrick's Cemetery in Leyton and more than 1,000 people were at the funeral. Mrs Stefania Budzianowska, a long-time teacher and chronicler of the school, became the new head of the institution. Religious lessons were taught by the newly arrived parish priest, the Revd Marian Walczak. The activities of the school were also of interest to Father Inflation W. Staniszewski, rector of the Catholic Mission (O'Driscoll, 2000).

The year 1965 was a very difficult one. Shortly after the death of priest N. Turulski, the Saturday school received a two-week notice from the English school. Suddenly it was left without a roof over its head; requests and protests did not help. The school returned to rooms under the church and rooms in the school building at 20 Devonia Road. An intensive search for a new building was led by the chairman, Mr Behnke, who finally found Islington Green School after many refusals from English schools, from which he received permission to rent premises for the Saturday school. He received six classrooms at his disposal. Some of the children moved to the new building and some stayed in the old one by the church and at number 20. In time, the establishment was recognised as a native language school and could use the building free of charge (O'Driscoll, 2000).

The school returned to activity. In addition to teaching native subjects, it participated in the life of the parish. The pupils often prepared productions for various parish events. Every year the feast of Christ the King and St Nicholas was celebrated, a nativity play was prepared, as well as celebrations of the Third of May, Corpus Christi and the end of the school year processions. The name days of the parish priest and headmistress were celebrated. Pupils were involved in inter-school competitions and academies (O'Driscoll, 2000).

In 1966 the millennium celebrations took place. A school celebration of the Millennium of Christian Poland was organised at Hammersmith Town Hall in London by PMS and Saturday Schools, in agreement with the Main Committee for the Celebration of the Millennium of Christian Poland. At the academy, pupils staged a historical scene – The Baptism of Poland (based on Jan Matejko) (*Tysiąclecie Polski Chrześcijańskiej* [The Millennium of Christian Poland], 1966).

Also in 1972, The Saturday School of Our Lady of Czestochowa, together with other Saturday Schools, participated in an academy to celebrate the National Day of the Constitution on 3 May in the hall of Westminster Cathedral in London. The programme of the academy was varied and of a high standard. It consisted of a re-enactment, dances, an orchestra and choir performance and recitations (School Academy in London, 1972). As part of its charity work, the school regularly collected money for the institution for the blind in Laski near Warsaw. There were also collections for various other causes, such as the Bus of Love, which transported sick pilgrims to Lourdes, for flood victims in Poland, for Polish children in other countries, for the House of Peaceful Old Age, for the restoration of the church in Devonian, for the Polish Educational Society.

Priest M. Walczak, who had gained a great affection for the children and young people during his five years at the Devonian school, died in 1970. He was replaced by Priest Dr Karol Zielinski, who became the caretaker and catechist of the school and at the same time rector of the Catholic Mission. In 1972, Mrs S. Budzianowska resigned from the leadership of the school due to her health and old age. Józef Kukliński, a long-time teacher, became the new president. During his tenure, the school celebrated its 25th anniversary. The celebrations and festivities reflected the future goals of the Polish school. In a paper published for the occasion, Mr J. Kuklinski wrote: “We aim to pass on the goods of a thousand-year-old Christian Poland. We want to see in every Polish child a good person and a reliable Pole” (O’Driscoll, 2000).

In 1976, Mr J. Kuklinski resigned from the position of school manager due to ill health. The next headmistress was Barbara Gabrielczyk, the wife of the president of the Polish Educational Society, who had taught at the Saturday school since the 1950s. The headmistress coordinated the work of the school, which was then housed in three buildings: in rooms by the church, at number 20 and in the English school.

In 1978, the pupils of the Saturday School of Our Lady of Czestochowa in London won an inter-school competition for knowledge about Poland, which was held at the POSK headquarters. The competition was very popular and brought together children, teachers, and parents alike. Competitions of this type were organised by the Polish Educational Society and later by the Polish Teachers’ Union Abroad (in Polish: *Zrzeszenie Nauczycielstwa Polskiego Zagranicą* – ZNPZ). They made it possible to

monitor the level of knowledge of the Polish language and Polish themes among Polish school students (Podhorodecka, 2003).

When Cardinal Karol Wojtyła was elected Pope in 1978, all children were proud to be Polish. Pupils wrote essays about him and collected newspaper cuttings and pictures. The election of a Pole as Pope incredibly raised the importance of the school and gave it a new meaning (O'Driscoll, 2010). In 1980 the Devonia church celebrated its 50th anniversary. The celebration was attended by the Metropolitan of Poznań Archbishop Jerzy Stroba and pupils, parents and teachers from the Polish Home School (O'Driscoll, 2010).

The year 1981 was declared the year of Polish youth. In February, pupils and teachers took part in a march through the streets of London. They marched to Westminster Cathedral, where Bishop Szczepan Wesoły celebrated the inaugural Mass. In 1982, Pope John Paul II visited England. Parishioners and school pupils welcomed him along with the rest of the Polish community at the Crystal Palace in south London.

Each year the number of children attending the school from mixed marriages increased, so Polish language courses for adults were organised. The lessons were funded by Inner London Education Authority funds. Many parents benefited from the opportunity to learn Polish. The adult class was taught for over 20 years by Mrs Aleksandra Halińska. In 1988, teachers and students were already preparing for the new Polish language examinations. The previous OL (Ordinary level) was replaced by the equivalent of a small *matura* exam, the so-called "School Certificate Examination" (SCE), which was at a slightly higher level than the previous exam.

In 1990, Mrs B. Gabrielczyk resigned as head of the school due to ill health. Mrs Barbara O'Driscoll, a former pupil and long-time teacher, and author of the school's geography and history textbooks, became head (O'Driscoll, 2010). This is how she recalled her school years:

The school was founded the year I was born. I started going to school, to kindergarten, when I was three years old, and somehow it has happened that since then I have been going to Devonia every Saturday. [...] My teacher for many years was Mrs Rządiewicz. She was short, petite but very warm-hearted and gentle. She didn't always manage her class, because the children teased, and disturbed her. Not me, of course, mostly boys, boys. And she was passionate about Poland, she wanted to convince us of how beautiful Poland was, how you had to love it and fight for it and spill blood. [...] I know that I couldn't cope with dictations, that I didn't like history lectures, that the map was drawn with eastern and western areas together. The main emphasis was on patriotism, and this has stayed in my memory. There were constantly some kind of academies, celebrations, or

events. There was non-stop dressing up in Krakow costume, waving flags, reciting poems and singing songs. The Vistula flowed on and on, and red poppies were constantly in bloom. At break times, doughnuts and hot very milky tea were handed out (O'Driscoll, 2000, p. 9).

Mrs B. O'Driscoll returned to the school on Devonian after many years away, but now as a teacher.

And as soon as my studies were finished, I went straight back "home" to Devonian. [...] There were still a lot of the same teachers. It was pleasant to find myself "on the other side." Mrs Budzianowska was proud of me that it was her pupil who had now become a teacher. So began the next stage of my life. I taught in various classes. Sometimes primary, sometimes middle school. I taught in different rooms, sometimes in the changing room and under the church, sometimes in a small room under 20, and sometimes in a large classroom in a school in Islington Green. At break times it was always the same doughnuts, the same tea and, most importantly, the chance to talk to other teachers, to meet former pupils who also worked at the school or brought their children (O'Driscoll, 2000, p.10).

And the work is very satisfying, mainly because I have to deal with such wonderful people, [...] who work for the school. [...] Even though sometimes I still regret my Saturdays, because there are so many other things to do, it is impossible to give up on school. Here you can be reminded once a week [...] of who you are and where your roots are from (O'Driscoll, 2000, p. 10).

The school entered its 40th year under new management. It continued to organise trips to the "Syrena" theatre, visits to the Sikorski Institute, as well as day trips outside London to the Rest House in Laxton Hall and the Marian Fathers in Fawley Court. Pupils participated in reading competitions organised by the Polish Teachers' Association Abroad, in conferences at the University of London's School of Slavonic and East European Studies and in Tertiary May Academies organised by the Polish Educational Society. An annual play was organised for the children and the school was visited by the "Small Form Theatre" with various plays and puppet shows (O'Driscoll, 2010).

In 1994 the school took part in the celebrations commemorating the centenary of the Polish Catholic Mission. Pupils and their parents attended Mass in Westminster Cathedral. The ceremony was presided over by the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, and the English Cardinal Basil Hume. In May 1995, pupils and parishioners participated in a parade organised by the Borough of Islington to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. In 1996, Parents' Committee treasurer Henryk Ilków entered the school into the national state lottery. The school received a

large amount of financial assistance. The funds were used to renovate the schoolhouse on Devonian Street and to purchase teaching aids. Pupils moved to the English school building, but the house had a library and a film room where the pupils could watch Polish films (O'Driscoll, 2010).

In 1997 and 1998, two very distinguished and popular teachers left the school: Mrs Albina Synowiec, who taught primary classes for 38 years, and Mrs Wanda Wielebnowska, who taught secondary classes for 32 years. In their place came young teachers from Poland (O'Driscoll, 2000). To care for second and third-generation immigrant children, a class was organised for pupils who spoke poor Polish. Parents could also attend Polish language classes, which were funded by the ILEA fund. The pride of the school lies in its achievements: between 1958 and 1985, 335 pupils passed their O-level examinations, between 1986 and 2009, 297 pupils passed their GCSE examinations, between 1967 and 2009, 309 pupils passed their A-levels. These were great successes not only for the pupils but also for the teachers responsible for the learning outcomes. The school's mission is primarily to promote Polish culture, but particular emphasis is placed on catechisation and religious education (O'Driscoll, 2010).

In July 2000, a celebration of the school's 50th anniversary was held, during which a solemn mass was celebrated, students staged a performance entitled *Map of Poland*. In the evening, a formal meeting of the school's graduates was organized (Adamiak-Pawelec, 2012).

[...] Fifty years of school, and all my life. I trust that the school will continue to exist for many generations to come, and this is what I wish for the school with all my heart. To all those who have been, are, and will be associated with the school, I warmly thank you for creating this beautiful community that is the Polish School of Native Subjects named after Our Lady of Czestochowa on Devonian (O'Driscoll, 2000, p. 10).

After 35 years of using the building on Islington Green, in 2001 the English school refused to continue to make it available because it wanted to use it on Saturdays for its classes. An intensive search for a new site began. Eventually, the Islington Municipality made the Islington Arts and Media School building in the Finsbury Park neighbourhood available, but only for a year. In 2002, the school moved even further away from Devonian, to the Finchley Catholic High School building. The school provided good facilities, but in return imposed a rather high rent. The school in Finchley was functioning very well. The area around the building was covered with greenery. There was a large dining hall, a storage room for school belongings and a chapel. After Poland joined the European Union, the number of children at the Saturday school doubled. The younger classes were handled by two teachers each so that the work went more smoothly (Adamiak-Pawelec, 2012).

Statements by male and female students of the Saturday School of Our Lady of Czestochowa on the topic “How do I rate Polish school”:

Thanks to the Polish language, I will always manage to talk to my family in Poland, which I am very happy about (Łukasz Furmaniak, 8 years old).

My teacher is very loving. I like it when the priest comes to our religion lessons. It’s cool that we can dress what we want to wear. I like how Santa Claus comes to us at Christmas (Lara Lissowska, 8 years old).

At the Polish School, lessons are only on Saturdays. It’s lucky that I only learn to read and write in Polish once a week at this school. The teachers are kind, but they ask too much homework. I really enjoy going on trips from the Polish School. For breakfast, we get doughnuts and juice to drink. I like Polish School and dislike it a little (Weronika Ilków, 9 years old).

I love my Polish school. I even wish I could come to school five times a week and only once to English school. I like my friends and my teacher. I am very interested in Polish history, religion, and Polish. I would like to start at 9.45 and for us to have two breaks, one that lasts 20 minutes and the other an hour. But we would have to finish at 2.30 a.m. I would like to have other lessons like P.E., art, and painting. I like my friends because they are very nice. After all, I think Polish culture is better than English culture. I like to play soccer, eat doughnuts and drink juice. In the future, I would like to do more historical performances (Jan Nowak, 11 years old).

I think the Polish School is good because I learn everything about Poland. I am very happy that I am half Polish and half Irish because I can go to both countries and know what is there. I like school because I have friends there and I will use Polish when I am an adult. I know a language that no one in my class at the English school knows (Janek O’Driscoll, 13 years old) (O’Driscoll, 2000, p. 73).

In 2005, the school hosted members of the Polish Underground and on this occasion, an exhibition of children’s works and a knowledge contest were organized. In April 2005, a special mass was held for the late Pope John Paul II (O’Driscoll, 2010). In 2008, students and their parents took part in a solemn mass at Westminster Cathedral and a parade to mark the 90th anniversary of Poland’s independence (Adamiak-Pawelec, 2012). That same year, due to the large number of students, the “Devonian” school moved to Greig City Academy in the borough of Haringey. More than 150 new families wanted to enrol their children in the school. Unfortunately, the facility, for the first time in its history, had to refuse them due to a lack of places. In 2009, several parallel classes were opened to accommodate more children. In all, 350 children were enrolled in the school.

In 2010, the school celebrated its 60th anniversary and the 80th anniversary of the

parish with which it had been associated since its inception. Priests taught religion classes at the school, prepared children for First Communion and Confirmation, and led retreats and altar boys' groups. These activities were assisted by the board of directors of the Parents' Committee, which was responsible for the financial side of the institution, the provision of premises and on-call duties. The school supported itself through fees paid by parents, the organization of games and income-generating events, sales in the store, as well as the rental of rooms in the Polish House (Adamiak-Pawelec, 2012).

Aleksandra Podchorodecka, former president of the Polish Educational Society and a distinguished teacher, remembers working at the Saturday school with sentiment:

The current year – the 50th anniversary year of our Saturday school on Devonian – is a jubilee of sorts for me as well. I started working at the school in September 1970, at the request of my mother, the late Maria Giertychowa, who was saddened that her nice class, taking a small high school diploma, was to be left without a teacher. The idea was to prepare students for the Ordinary Level (OL) state exam in Polish. What one doesn't do for a mother? [...]. It wasn't always easy, it's true. In time, I moved on to the AL class. And today I can proudly say that the students did not let me down. Although I had to get angry with them, urge them to study, and chastise them for missed homework, after all, they all passed the Polish exam. At the last minute, in a situation that was already completely subterranean, they grabbed their notes, came to our house in the evenings, studied and somehow pushed through this exam, which, after all, was never easy. And to this day it still counts as an additional AL on the application form for higher education. [...] We can be proud of our students. They have entered the English working world and occupy important and responsible positions in it. And after all, this is also to some extent due to the Saturday school. And together with them, we rejoice in their achievements. And on the occasion of the present anniversary, I wish them, these "my" children, continued success in life and that they do not forget that they are Polish. And that, as Pope John Paul II once said, "means something" (O'Driscoll, 2000, p. 42).

Students from Poland studying bilingual children came to the school, as well as reporters from English newspapers interested in the school's history. Some of the students' works were exhibited at the Museum of London as part of an exhibition titled "The People of London." In January 2010, priest rector Tadeusz Kukla visited the school. In April, a memorial service was held at Westminster Cathedral for the victims of the Smolensk plane crash that killed Polish President Lech Kaczynski and his wife Maria, the last president in emigration Ryszard Kaczorowski and more than 90 other important figures. In May, celebrations were held to mark the 80th anniversary of the parish and the 60th anniversary of the school (O'Driscoll, 2010).

## Conclusion

The activity of Polish schools of native subjects has been, and still is, a crucial element in the national and religious education of Polish children in emigration. The Polish School of Native Subjects named after Our Lady of Czestochowa has carried out this task for several decades and continues to do so today. The school's mission is first and foremost the propagation of Polish culture, the teaching of the Polish language, Polish history and geography, but particular emphasis is placed on catechisation and religious upbringing (it has prepared children for their First Communion and Confirmation).

The beginnings of the school were modest. A few children attended, and classes were taught by one teacher and one catechist priest, but after three years of operation, in 1953, the school already had 126 pupils (O'Driscoll, 2010). Over the years the school struggled with financial and accommodation problems. Despite many difficulties, the school continued to grow and develop thanks to the hard work of many generations of teachers and parents. It should be mentioned that attendance at the Saturday school was not a result of compulsory schooling by law, but depended on the understanding of parents and their concern for their offspring's home education.

After Poland acceded to the European Union, an increase in the child population doubled. Today, the school has several hundred pupils and, as a result of great interest, there are not enough places in the classes. The face of the school is also different than in the early years. There are many more children from mixed marriages. The level of knowledge of the Polish language is more varied. Some children recently arrived from Poland and those from the second generation of Poles in exile. There are not as many academies and there is less emphasis on patriotism. Polish children have an easier situation than their predecessors, they meet children of different origins. The fact that they are of foreign origin no longer surprises anyone (O'Driscoll, 2000).

Beyond the teaching of home subjects, the school has always been involved in the life of the Church and the parish. It participated in the celebration of national holidays, in patriotic ceremonies, as well as in numerous lectures and historical lectures. The aim of the Polish School of Native Subjects named after Our Lady of Czestochowa was to maintain and deepen national and religious awareness among children and young people, to educate the young generation in the spirit of the faith of the fathers, national tradition and culture, and loyalty to the cause of independence and freedom of the Republic of Poland. This objective has been achieved, and the school's great merit is the upbringing of several generations of people proud of their origins, identity and rich cultural heritage.



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