



CHAPTER 4

Planning for the Future: Special Education and the Creation of ‘Healthy Minds’

Steven J. Taylor

INTRODUCTION

This chapter turns to explore how special education developed in England to manage a population of children living with mental impairment. Focusing primarily on the years following the introduction of the Education Act (Epileptic and Defective Children), 1899, it explores the identification, observation, certification and methods of ‘managing’ those deemed to not be mentally healthy enough to attend mainstream or, as they were referred to historically, ‘ordinary’ schools. The influence of government legislation and regulatory bodies alongside the local experience of special education at the Sandwell Hall School for Mentally Defective Children, near Birmingham, is to be considered. Furthermore, it will examine the level of professionalisation and expertise that emerged among those managing the school. The chapter thus seeks to deal with abstract conceptualisations of ‘healthy’ minds, as well as more tangible lived experiences.

S. J. Taylor (✉)

School of History, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK

e-mail: slt48@leicester.ac.uk

© The Author(s) 2020

S. J. Taylor and A. Brumby (eds.), *Healthy Minds
in the Twentieth Century*, Mental Health in Historical Perspective,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-27275-3_4

Special education at this time was embedded in legislative policy and a broader socio-medical discourse. Mathew Thomson has argued that the beginning of the twentieth century was a turning point when society came to see itself through a ‘psychological’ prism. Such a transformation had particular implications for children as they passed through the mainstream elementary education system and its psychology influenced pedagogy.¹ Ordinary schools began to offer a more child-centred approach to the curriculum at this time, which may have been more frustrating and less accessible for children with learning difficulties than the learning by memory and discipline of the nineteenth-century schoolroom. The special school thus was markedly different from the ordinary school.

Mark Jackson has conducted an in-depth study of Mary Dendy and the Sandlebridge School that she founded in Cheshire for mentally defective children.² In his work, Jackson uses this school as a prism to gain a more thorough insight into ideas about ‘feeble-mindedness’ at the end of the nineteenth century. Dendy believed that mental deficiency lay at the root of social problems and subsequently she promoted the permanent segregation of the mentally deficient individual for their own good and that of society.³ Like Jackson’s work, this chapter uses a special school as a lens for its analysis but in a very different way. Here we delve more into the mechanics of special education through the experience of the Sandwell School for Mentally Defective Children, to examine issues of education, charity, policy and, to a degree, lived experience, whereas Jackson considered ideas about the nature of feeble-mindedness and how they were shaped by institutional experience.

As we find elsewhere in this volume, particularly the contributions from Jan Walmsley and Michelle O’Reilly et al., defining and classifying mental illness and disability have been important areas of discussion. In this chapter, classification is a particularly fluid issue as the Education Act (Epileptic and Mentally Defective Children), 1899, did not define the criteria for determining ‘defectiveness’ and the later Mental Deficiency Act, 1913, served as social rather than educational legislation.⁴ The measure applied in practice was the ability to benefit from education, but not being mentally disabled or ‘merely dull or backward’.⁵ Subsequently, there was a degree of subjectivity related to the type of children that were admitted to special schools, and Pamela Dale has observed that ‘education was marginalized by other agendas that prioritized long-term care and control’.⁶ Subsequently, as we have seen in Rachel Hewitt’s chapter dealing with the work of epileptic colonies, this was a contested

area that focused on developing mentally defective children for independent adult lives but also, if necessary, preparing them for a lifetime of care and control in specialised institutions.

These spaces of care were almost as ill-defined as the types of individuals they were built to accommodate. Looking at the Birmingham area more specifically, Rebecca Wynter, using the Monyhull Epileptic Colony as a lens, emphasises the importance of local lay individuals such as Ellen Pinsent, who features in more depth later in this chapter, in the process of identifying and separating ‘unhealthy’ minds from the healthy.⁷ Wynter concludes that definitions of mental defectiveness operated at local levels despite often being enshrined in national legislation. Therefore, when assessing the experience of the Sandwell Hall School in this chapter, both local and national definitions of healthy minds will be presented.

LEGISLATING FOR HEALTHY MINDS

Twentieth-century concerns about the intellectual abilities of children have their roots in the second half of the previous century. The Lunacy Acts of 1845 legislated on a mass-scale for the compulsory confinement and treatment of England’s insane population in publicly funded lunatic asylums. Yet, while there have been numerous scholarly studies that have explored the nature of institutional confinement for the insane,⁸ children have received less attention.⁹ In the fifty years following the Lunacy Acts the number of people, children included, in Britain certified as a ‘lunatic’, ‘imbecile’ or ‘idiot’ exploded. It was estimated that by 1909 there were 271,000 certified lunatics and mentally defectives in England and Wales, ‘or very nearly one in every 100 of the population’.¹⁰ Despite the mass building of asylums and workhouse lunacy wards, authorities and doctors were ill-equipped to offer effective treatment to such large numbers.¹¹ Subsequently, mental illness and disability became increasingly important issues at a national level.

Coinciding with changing attitudes towards mental health, children, as a distinct population, also emerged as a specific concern of policymakers, reformers and philanthropists in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹² Ideas of national efficiency and potential imperial decline were the driving force behind these changes. The young, and particularly the offspring of the urban working poor, were increasingly depicted as the future of both nation and empire within these discourses.

As the first Chief Medical Officer at the Board of Education, George Newman, observed ‘children determine the destinies of all civilisations, that the race or society which succeeds with its mammoth ships and its manufactures but fails to produce men and women, is on the brink of irretrievable doom’.¹³ At a national level, there was an increased focus on children, placing value on their education and the removal of factors detrimental to their development. Importantly, for the themes of this volume, there was a belief in the contaminating influence of unhealthy minds, which led to the segregation of those with learning disabilities from the mainstream school population. The academic capabilities of ‘deficient’ and ‘defective’ children thus were linked directly to the social and economic potential of the nation.

These concerns led to a sustained medical interest in the training and management of children with supposedly unhealthy minds. Perhaps the most influential voice in this area was Dr. George E. Shuttleworth who worked as Assistant Medical Officer at the Earlswood Idiot Asylum and Medical Superintendent at the Royal Albert Asylum. In 1895, Shuttleworth published, what he described as, a ‘little Manual to the Medical Profession, and to the increasing number of the Public who take an interest in the special education of mentally deficient children’.¹⁴ Aware of his professional and lay audience the ‘manual’ spanned an array of issues including social context, medical classification, aetiology, treatment and education, while attempting to discuss gradations of impairment from the ‘dull’ to ‘idiots’, who were considered to be the most severe of cases.¹⁵ The section on education is most relevant to this chapter and volume. Shuttleworth subdivided this into three sections: ‘educational’, ‘industrial’ and ‘moral’.¹⁶ Educational training was concerned with the physical and mental development of the child and followed the Froebelian philosophy of learning through doing. There was a focus on ‘sensory’ training over the ‘three R’s’ that formed the backbone of the mainstream school curriculum. The section on industrial education dealt with activities that could be adopted in special schools that would best prepare children for their adult lives as part of an industrial workforce. Some examples include paper weaving—considered good preparation for the trade of sock darning, and the ‘pricker’, used for perforated pictures, that was seen as an introduction to cobbling.¹⁷ Of course, many of these activities were gender specific and while boys were guided towards, depending on their ability, carpentry, woodcarving, gardening and farming, girls were ‘encouraged to take an interest in

domestic matters and to assist in the still-room'.¹⁸ The third strand, moral education, aimed to interweave with the academic and industrial elements of a child's education in order to instil the core pillars of middle-class respectability. There was an underlying belief that the feeble-minded were susceptible to slip into vice and criminality and therefore effective moral education would help to prevent social decline.¹⁹ To reinforce the moral instruction Shuttleworth promoted a system of rewards (such as praise in front of peers and commendation) and punishment (which included corporeal punishment, although the effectiveness was questioned, and withholding favourite foods).²⁰ Thus, we can see from Shuttleworth's work that shaping young unhealthy minds into future socially efficient and respectable citizens was paramount.

Despite the work and influence of Shuttleworth, debate continued about the nature of mentally deficient children and following the passage of the Mental Deficiency Act in 1913, Alfred Binet and Thomas Simon published their work on intelligence testing in France. Their attention was on children that they defined as 'abnormal' and they explained this classification to mean 'those who are suitable neither for the ordinary school nor the asylum; for the school they are not sufficiently good, for the asylum not sufficiently bad'.²¹ It was from this population of supposedly 'abnormal' children that the special schools were populated. Binet and Simon's work was designed to provide an objective and scientific rationale for special education after criticising the subjectivity and 'selfish interests' of philanthropy in establishing the schools.²² The motives of those managing schools are something that we will turn to later in this chapter. Binet and Simon measured the abilities of an individual to those of a supposedly 'normal' child of the same age and then divided the mental age by the actual age to reveal the intelligence quotient or IQ. According to their formula, children under nine who were two years behind in mental development were 'probably' deficient, and those aged over nine whose development was three years behind were 'definitely' deficient. These tests functioned as a guide to ensure the admission of the correct children to special schools, making sure that those who could progress in an ordinary school, nor those that would not advance in any educational setting did not enter. There was initially a slow take up in England, but the attempt to create an unhealthy mind, as a classification based in science, is an important one.

In Birmingham, the tests were not taken up and the School Board adopted the approach of providing special classes, rather than schools

for suitable children. As early as December 1900, all of these had been certified by the Board of Education under the Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act, 1899.²³ To get a sense of demand on these special classes, the School Board of the city, in 1903, commissioned school attendance officers to conduct an analysis of the number of defective children receiving an education. The method of counting was, somewhat, imperfect considering that attendance officers only had contact with children already known to them but the results, in Table 4.1, reveal the range of issues that were dealt with in special classes at the time.²⁴

It is immediately evident that children with supposed unhealthy minds numbered fewer than those with physical impairments. However, this was a rudimentary counting exercise that did not take into account the ‘invisibility’ of mental health issues and the fears that parents might have in disclosing them to authorities, especially if it might bring them closer to requiring medical relief from the much maligned poor law. Furthermore, there is a lack of nuance in the classification system with no insight into how many of those counted as ‘weak intellect,

Table 4.1 The prevalence of ‘defective’ children in Birmingham schools, 1903

	<i>Under 5 years</i>	<i>5–14 attend- ing school</i>	<i>5–14 not attending school</i>	<i>Over 14 years</i>	<i>Total</i>
Cripples	24	33	146	0	203
Deaf, deaf and dumb, dumb, or defective speech	3	19	25	2	47
Defective sight	1	4	55	0	60
Epileptics	11	4	39	0	52
St Vitus Dance	0	1	18	0	19
Weak intellect, feeble-minded, imbecile	2	39	61	0	102
Various diseases	0	0	10	0	10
Total	41	98	352	2	493

Source Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Birmingham Education Committee, Special Schools Committee of the School Board Minutes, 10 February 1898–17 March 1903, SB/B11/1/1/1, p. 214

feeble-minded, and imbecile' would have benefited from education, a key factor in filtering children into the classes. These numbers therefore need to be handled with a healthy degree of cynicism, but are nevertheless useful in providing some context into how the Birmingham School Board approached the issue of mental disability and special education.

The proactive approach of Birmingham authorities in attempting to provide educational provision for those that were described as defective was not mirrored in all areas and the Mental Deficiency Act, 1913 in an attempt to impose some kind of uniformity, defined four classes of the mentally defective population. These were idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded and the morally defective; the latter category was appropriated to include single unmarried mothers, demonstrating the fluid nature of definition and the moralistic concerns of authorities. Yet as Wynter has observed, the definitions of mental impairment fluctuated when deployed at the local level.²⁵ With local authorities, under the auspices of the newly formed Board of Control, given responsibility for the supervision and protection of defectives, both inside and outside of institutions it is important to assess how local ideas about mental capabilities formulated in practice.²⁶ This is possible for Birmingham thanks to a definitional exercise that took place two years prior to this seminal legislation. The Medical Superintendent of the Birmingham School Board, the Superintendent of Special Schools and the Chairman of the Special Schools Sub-Committee decided that clear classifications of mental deficiency in relation to the children already attending special classes in the city was required, in order to better understand the level of demand in Birmingham. This exercise created the local boundaries found in Table 4.2.

Unsurprisingly, children in Class V were the least ubiquitous in Birmingham's special schools while those in Class IV, those potentially requiring care into adulthood, were the most common. The description of each class was shaped around social and economic factors, rather than medical concerns. For instance, any child counted in Classes I through IV was only included because their families were judged not to have the means to assist them when they reached the age of 16, thus excluding them from Class V. In addition, Classes II and III were primarily linked to social efficiency and economic potential, whereas I and IV were concerned with the expense that might be incurred to the public purse. This echoes the findings of the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded whose report in 1908 informed the

Table 4.2 Classification of the special school population in the Birmingham area, 1911

Class I	Cases urgently in need of further care and control; suitable for Residential Schools for the mentally defective
Class II	Cases that have a chance of becoming self-supporting
Class III	Cases that may become temporary wage-earners but that will need further care and control on the break-up of their homes
Class IV	Cases that will need further care and control in an institution at 16 or when they leave the Day Schools
Class V	Cases where parents will be in a position to look after them when they leave—well to do parents

Source Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Special School Minute Book 1, BCC1/BH/5/1/1/1, p. 395

Mental Deficiency Act. Ellen Pinsent, the only female Commissioner and a key personality in driving the direction of educational provision in Birmingham, stated in 1909:

There are numbers of mentally-defective persons whose training is neglected, over whom no sufficient control is exercised, and whose wayward and irresponsible lives are productive of crime and misery, of much injury and mischief to themselves and to others, and of much continuous expenditure.²⁷

The report also reinforced two stereotypes about the feeble-minded: the first, being that the condition replicated itself from one generation to the next and the second, that the feeble-minded were more likely to engage in vice and criminality. The managers of the Sandwell Hall School readily bought into these tropes. Their initial prospectus stated: ‘The history of the lives of mentally-defective people shows that if at liberty they materially increase the numbers of paupers, criminals, inebriates, and prostitutes, while the children to whom they too often give birth cannot fail to sink into the dependent class’.²⁸ It was argued that the children of these parents fell into two categories: the first were the criminal, vicious and immoral and the second were those living in ‘bad homes’. For those in the latter category, the issue was not in the physical structure of the home, although many children lived in far from ideal abodes, but rather the occupants, with parents depicted as ‘vicious’, neglectful and ‘cruel’.²⁹ Due to these circumstances, it was considered that mentally impaired children had ‘no chance of becoming good citizens’ without some kind of guidance in the form of education.³⁰

SANDWELL HALL SCHOOL

The buildings used for the Sandwell Hall School, an Institution for the Care of Mentally Defective Children, belonged to the Earl of Dartmouth and from 1897 to 1905 the Lunacy Commissioners of Birmingham used them to house 200 lunatic patients on the site.³¹ These were mainly ‘quiet and dependable’ convalescent patients from the Winson Green Asylum and they demonstrate the site’s utility as a medical space, rather than an educational one immediately prior to its conversion. It was located in 30 acres and ‘the land included in the holding is sufficient for exercise purposes and for the cultivation of vegetables for use in the Institution’.³² The school was founded in 1908 and opened its doors to children the following year, with space for 80 boys and 70 girls. The Staff were resident and included a matron and teachers, with a Medical Officer visiting frequently. Unlike the Sandlebridge School in Cheshire, it did not intend to offer permanent care of the individuals that attended, although this element of provision was included in the original documentation.

Sandwell Hall School’s guiding principles closely reflected the findings of the Royal Commission; the building itself had strong links with confining lunatic patients and the idea for it came from Rev. Harold Nelson Burden a colleague on the Royal Commission on the Feeble-Minded of the school’s Honorary Secretary, Mrs. Ellen Pinsent. Upon his death in 1930, Burden was acclaimed as a ‘pioneer in the research of problems connected with mental deficiency’ and had worked in British India and East London before founding the National Institutions for Persons Requiring Care and Control.³³ The school was also managed and supervised by a Committee of Visitors made up of influential members of the local community. It included: G. H. Kenrick as Chairman—also Chair of the Birmingham Education Committee; David Davis Chairman of the Birmingham Asylums Committee; H. J. Sayer and A. J. Norton both former Chairmen of the Birmingham Board of Guardians; William Brown the Chair of the Aston Board of Guardians; Joseph Walter the Chairman of the King’s Norton Board of Guardians; four members of the Birmingham Education Committee; and Dr. Violet Hill who was a member of the Special Schools After-Care Committee. Nominally, this organisation managed Sandwell Hall but from the outset, Burden made it clear that the school was ‘financially under my own control and direction’.³⁴ The appointment of the Council was effective in tying the

school to prominent figures across the city who had vested interests in providing suitable instruction to children and Pinsent was the key to ensuring that the new educational endeavour gained traction. She had served on the Royal Commission on the Feeble-Minded (1904–1908), was a Commissioner on the Board of Control from 1921 to 1932, but most significantly was elected to the Birmingham School Board's Special Schools Committee on 19 June 1900 and chaired it from 1901.³⁵ Less than a year later the School Board founded, upon her suggestion, an After-Care Sub-Committee to monitor individuals who were no longer under the supervision of special schools,³⁶ thus demonstrating her influence in directing special educational policy across the city.³⁷ Additionally, her influence and expertise in the management of mental deficiency were far-reaching, as attested to by Margaret MacDowall who wrote a treatise on the training of mentally defective children in 1919. In her introduction, she noted that following the Mental Deficiency Act, 1913, she retired to focus on the education of 'only a few children' as she 'could not work under the inspection of those who possibly might be unsympathetic'.³⁸ However, following an inspection from Pinsent in July 1916 MacDowall was reinvigorated into her work and accredits the inspiration for writing her volume to Pinsent. Subsequently, Pinsent's influence in the field is not to be underestimated.

As might be expected, the fate of Sandwell Hall, and the children associated with it, was closely intertwined with the figures of Burden and Pinsent and the experience of this institution reveals much about attitudes towards unhealthy young minds at this time. The promotional material for the school heralded the social role that it would fulfil and stated that 'children of feeble mental capacity are peculiarly liable to fall into sexual vices'.³⁹ It went on to note that those subject to violent tendencies 'are brought under control if the children are removed from home surroundings'.⁴⁰ These tropes about mentally deficient children held social weight and subsequently mainstream schools were deemed unsuitable because 'defective' children were considered to 'be incurable truants, and receive no benefit from instruction in Day Schools, on account of the irregularity of their attendance'.⁴¹ As we have seen in Birmingham, the School Board was particularly aware of the presence of children requiring special education and attempted to provide appropriate education for them.

The management of the school adopted an approach that meant those taken would not become accustomed to a lifestyle that they were

considered unlikely to maintain upon on the termination of their time at the school. They stated, in correspondence to the Board of Education, 'In view of the fact that they are never likely to have a high wage-earning capacity, the Managers are of the opinion that the provision made should be on economical lines'.⁴² Such a statement was about making sure that the children under care knew their position in society but also may have prevented some applications from parents who could have viewed Sandwell Hall as a desirable alternative to workhouse accommodation.⁴³

There was also an economic concern for local authorities who had to find extra money to fund residential education for children who could not attend 'ordinary' day schools. The Sandwell Hall council was told that 'the Local Education Authority (LEA) will only send children to it if the amount for each child does not exceed £27.10'.⁴⁴ In this instance, the LEA was in a position where it could dictate price, this concentrated the minds of managers who had to balance financial pressures that were associated with the residential nature of their educational offer. In an attempt to relieve economic concerns, Pinsent wrote to the Board of Education suggesting that they employed a head teacher with the salary of £40 per year with board and lodging. The proposed salary was significantly below those of class teachers working in day special schools in Birmingham. The LEA recommended that an 'uncertificated Assistant Mistress' should earn the salary of between £70 and £80 per annum, a substantial discrepancy with the head teacher salary at Sandwell Hall even with board and lodging taken into account.⁴⁵

The Board of Education met with Burden and Pinsent to discuss the matter further. During this meeting, Pinsent stated that they had advertised for the post of Headmistress on the proposed terms but 'only one answered and she was quite impossible'.⁴⁶ To widen the net it was suggested 'that the rule may be relaxed and that they may be at liberty to appoint an uncertified teacher to the post'.⁴⁷ Here we see the quality of instruction was directly balanced against the financial health of the school, even though Mr. Tabor of the Board of Education reported that 'they [Pinsent and Burden] are certain that they will then be able to obtain a really competent person'.⁴⁸ The paradoxical nature of this statement did not seem to worry Burden or Pinsent as they attempted to get more by paying less. Pinsent used some of the professional capital that she had accrued serving on the Royal Commission and found an ally in Dr. Eichholz, the Board of Education's Inspector of Special Schools. Who commented that 'there is much force in Mrs. Pinsent's arguments. They are going to take the worst

cases who will never repay in their careers a large educational outlay'.⁴⁹ Eichholz argued in favour of the proposal to appoint an uncertified teacher because he believed that LEAs would never agree to pay fees equivalent to those found in mainstream schools. However, support was not universal with Tabor commenting 'I should have thought that the additional cost of a certified teacher would be very small, and hardly appreciable in so large a general expenditure'⁵⁰; and George Newman, the Chief Medical Officer, stating 'the Regulations [for Defective and Epileptic Schools] of 11th July 1904 are absolutely binding, the Board being given no discretionary power, we must, I fear, tell Mrs. Pinsent that we cannot waive the requirements of paragraph 6(a)'.⁵¹

Before the Board of Education had reached a decision, Pinsent attempted to raise the stakes and wrote a letter to Dr. Eichholz informing him that she had decided to appoint Frances Dipper as the school's first Headmistress. Dipper was aged 28 and Pinsent provided a glowing reference of her professional qualities. Listing her experience working in both an elementary school and special school in Birmingham, at the latter she had 'distinguished herself by the control she has gained over some of the most difficult among the scholars'.⁵² This appointment forced the Board to make a decision on recognising an uncertified teacher. Pinsent though sought to mitigate this issue and informed the Board that Dipper 'was not able to go to college or to read for her certificate, owing to home claims, her mother being a widow and relying on her for help both pecuniary and domestic'.⁵³ Dipper was depicted as exemplary and respectable and she fulfilled the expected gender roles of Edwardian women. Commenting on Pinsent's reputation the Board agreed to approve Miss Dipper as Headmistress subject to approval from the Inspector, the sympathetic Dr. Eichholz.

With Dipper in place as Headmistress, the cost per child was set at £24 per annum, inclusive of clothing expenses. Furthermore, word of the school had also spread and the LEAs of Worcester, Rochford Hundred, Hereford, Berkshire and Chester had agreed to send children to the school, as had the Poor Law Guardians of Aston, Leicester and Wolverhampton. The Board of Education and the Local Government Board conducted inspection of the school's standards, with the Board of Control taking over some of these duties from 1914.

Sandwell Hall was one strand of provision for mentally defective children in Birmingham and operated in conjunction with the day special schools that were managed by the Birmingham School Board and

after 1902 the LEA. When Dr. Eichholz inspected the Bristol Street Special School in 1908, he noted that ‘the following children William B., William L., Joseph D., Annie R., and Jas B. are in capable of receiving benefit from day school instruction, and should not continue on the roll of this school. They are fit cases for permanent care’.⁵⁴ This report sparked a reaction from the Special Schools Sub-Committee to the wider school population in Birmingham and they stated on 13 May 1908 that ‘there are at least 40 cases of the above description in the special schools under this Committee’s control, needing permanent care and suitable for a boarding school’.⁵⁵ To deal with such a problem it was decided that ‘in view of the fact that Sandwell Hall will probably be filled during the next three months’ the Committee should make contact with Rev. Burden and reserve the necessary spaces.⁵⁶ This, of course, was mutually beneficial to parties and Ellen Pinsent with her oversight of Sandwell Hall and special education ensured that Birmingham was in prime position to filter appropriate children towards the school. By examining the experiences of some of these ‘appropriate’ children, it is possible to glean a better understanding of Sandwell Hall, ideas of healthy minds, and those who were responsible for education.

On 23 April 1909, there were 20 children admitted to the school, its largest intake since opening.⁵⁷ This was followed by a steady flow of children, such as Alice T. and Albert B. who both entered on 21 May 1909 with the fees covered by public funds and Rebecca S. who was admitted 1 June 1909 with her parents contributing 1/per week. Rebecca S. demonstrates that although there had been a move towards compulsory state-funded education, for children living with learning difficulties the normal funding streams did not always apply and parental contributions were sought. In another case, Douglas H. aged 9 had been truanting from the George West Day School for Mentally Defective Children in the city. In October 1909, his father appeared before the Appeals Committee of the LEA to account for his absence from school. It was recorded that ‘the lad appeared to be beyond his father’s control and declined to go with the Guide provided by the Committee’. Due to the difficulty of the boy’s behaviour, it was decided that he was unsuitable for a day school and arrangements were made for him to be admitted to Sandwell Hall.⁵⁸ In this instance, the only details that are presented about the child in question are their challenging behaviour, again providing an insight into the range of needs that were accommodated at Sandwell Hall.

With the complexities associated with the needs of children, it is worth remembering that Sandwell Hall was not simply a dumping ground for those who were unable to function in society but rather, it was expected to maintain and provide a suitable standard of education for its pupils.⁵⁹ Therefore, when Dr. Eichholz inspected the premises in 1910, he found that four children, John W. (aged 14), Lily T. (14), Mary K. (12) and Annie R. (12), all previously removed from the Bristol Street School, were deemed to be ‘uneducable’ and should be removed from the roll. Despite their unsuitability, the Birmingham Special Schools Sub-Committee noted that ‘in the event of these children leaving the institution arrangement be made where possible for them to be admitted to Day Schools in the City’.⁶⁰ This suggests that in this instance at least, the school space was used to control and supervise these children instead of being part of a concerted attempt to improve their educational and intellectual achievements. In a notable aside, John W.’s parents were chased for an outstanding contribution of 3/for his time in Sandwell Hall. Prosecution was discussed but it is uncertain if this action ever came to fruition.

It is evident from the classifications of children admitted to the school that there were tensions between central legislation and local practice. These tensions also manifested in the governance of the school and on the 13 October 1909 the Special School Sub-Committee at Birmingham was informed via its Chairman, Ellen Pinsent, of the resignation of the Sandwell Hall Council. It was resolved that Rev. Burden would be asked to furnish details of the new methods and conditions for governing the school and to provide ‘full information’ as to the new management committee.⁶¹ Furthermore, Councillor Kenrick, previously the Chairman of the Sandwell Hall Council, and Councillor Jephcott, were appointed as LEA visitors for the school with responsibility for making sure it met local standards. This occurrence was a schism in the operation of the school. Only a month earlier, on 15 September 1909, a letter was submitted to the Special Schools Sub-Committee (chaired by Pinsent) from the Honorary Secretary of Sandwell Hall (also Pinsent), with regard to the opening of a new school at Stoke Park near Bristol, by the National Institutions for Persons Requiring Care and Control with Rev. Burden as the Warden. Rather than noting the impending implosion of Sandwell Hall, the committee decided to speak to the relevant Poor Law Guardians of the city with a view to admitting Amy T. and

Frank K. who had both been deemed too ‘low grade’ for education at Sandwell Hall.⁶² Therefore, it appears that space to accommodate such children was at premium and the committee were willing to overlook the mismanagement of the school in order to find spaces for Birmingham children. Those children that were unsuitable for Sandwell Hall should have been maintained in an Idiot or Imbecile Asylum but space inside them was at a premium and private institutions required a nomination.⁶³

Following the resignation of the council, and subsequent inadequate communication from Rev. Warden regarding the future direction of the school, it was resolved at the December meeting of the Special Schools Sub-Committee ‘that no more children be sent to [Sandwell] Hall... until the Board of Education signify their approval of the new conditions under which the institution will be managed’.⁶⁴ It was not until April 1910 that such reassurance was given, even though it was accompanied, when it did arrive, by the caveat that approval was only a temporary measure for twelve months while they awaited a more secure plan for the management of the school. We thus see that the education of children considered to have unhealthy minds was at the whim of personal disputes and political decisions on both the local and national stage.

In 1911, a local examination of all children in Birmingham’s special schools was carried out using the classification system discussed above in Table 4.2. The purpose was to identify the number of children requiring residential care and the likelihood of the special school population to be in some way self-supporting in adult life. Included in the survey were 837 children with the results displayed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Birmingham Special School survey, 1911

	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Class I—Residential schools	58	65	123	14.7
Class II—Chance of being self supporting	135	72	207	24.7
Class III—Temporary wage earners	141	74	215	25.7
Class IV—Further control post-16	152	128	280	33.5
Class V—Well to do families	8	4	12	1.4

Source Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Special School Minute Book 1, BCC1/BH/5/1/1/1, p. 394

Alongside the broad classification, a more nuanced medical assessment of mentally defective children was also conducted. This found that there were 48 children in Birmingham suffering from epilepsy, but not mental deficiency and a further 23 in the extended city area. There were 9 children with combined epilepsy and mental deficiency, with 11 in the wider city area; and 111 mentally defective children without epilepsy and 52 in the wider city area.⁶⁵ Significantly, these counting exercises were designed not to ascertain the amount of room in Sandwell Hall that the Birmingham LEA required but rather as part of a plan to include mentally defectives in the Board's Monyhull Epileptic Colony, thus circumventing the reliance on Sandwell Hall. The Special Schools Sub-Committee concluded that the numbers had most likely been underestimated due to some parents not wanting to commit their children to specialist education until legislation compelled them to do so. Nevertheless they noted that 'during the next few years the Guardians would require places for 130 children and the Education Committee about 260 children, provision would be made for careful classification of the children, as the colony is to consist of detached homes'.⁶⁶ These comments signalled a shift in approach to directing children requiring residential care to the Monyhull Colony. The impact on Sandwell Hall was the loss of its most prolific contributor of children and subsequently a substantial reduction in revenue. In a further blow to Sandwell Hall, Ellen Pinsent and David Davies, formerly on the Council at the school, took up new roles on a committee to oversee the management of Monyhull, signalling a further distancing of the LEA from school.⁶⁷

The financial consequences of the rift between the two parties were most starkly evidenced in the payments made by the LEA to the school. In October 1909, the Birmingham LEA paid the sum of £219 6s 8d for the maintenance of children present at Sandwell Hall. Three years later, in October 1912, the payment had reduced to £48 4s 10d for nine girls who the LEA had struggled to find alternative places for.⁶⁸ The school struggled on until 1921 but it was blighted by financial concerns and inability, in a time of expanding numbers of the mentally deficient, to fill its spaces. This was compounded by the reluctance of Rev. Burden to commit more of his own resources to the school and frequent requests from him to the Board of Education for an advance in grant payments that central government paid to special schools for each eligible pupil that was present. In 1921, the situation at the school had deteriorated to such an extent that the Board of Education refused to recertify the

school citing ‘serious irregularities’.⁶⁹ Burden attempted to appeal, stating ‘the defects in the school, such as they are, are wholly traceable to the lack of funds due to the exceedingly small amount paid for maintenance’.⁷⁰ The Board did not reconsider and the Sandwell Hall School subsequently closed in December 1921, with its buildings demolished seven years later.

CONCLUSIONS

The experience of the Sandwell Hall School reveals that efforts at caring for and managing the healthy minds of children at the beginning of the twentieth century were centred on the intellectual and moral health of the child. Operating in a compulsory and state education system it was inevitable that ideas of mental deficiency were influenced by national and local inputs. Sandwell Hall grew out of wider concerns, its founders meeting as they worked on the Royal Commission on the Feeble-Minded together, work that they both considered essential to the national interest. The focus of Burden and Pinsent was on attempting to ameliorate the mental conditions of children and the school was founded on a belief that education would materially benefit the individual, both immediately and in their later life. However, in practice, interventions were symbolic of power struggles that existed about how best to manage this specific population of children in order to educate them into a socially efficient, ‘healthy’ and independent-minded members of the population. In the end, the Sandwell Hall School descended into farce and economic ruin, with the interests of its pupils and their ‘unhealthy’ minds apparently secondary to personal ambitions.

Acknowledgements This research was completed as part of my Wellcome Trust Institutional Strategic Support Fellowship Early Career Award held at the University of Leicester, 204801/Z/16/Z.

NOTES

1. Matthew Thomson, *Psychological Subjects: Identity, Culture, and Health in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 111.
2. Mark Jackson, *The Borderland of Imbecility: Medicine, Society and the Fabrication of the Feeble Mind in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

3. Mark Jackson, "Institutional Provision for the Feeble-Minded in Edwardian England: Sandlebridge and the Scientific Morality of Permanent Care," in *From Idiocy to Mental Deficiency: Historical Perspectives on People with Learning Disabilities*, eds. A. Digby and D. Wright (London: Routledge, 1996), 161–183.
4. David Daniel, "The Ineducable Children of Leeds: The Operation of the Defective Children and Mental Deficiency Legislation in Leeds, 1900–29," *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 29, no. 2 (July 1997): 121–141, 122.
5. Daniel, "The Ineducable Children of Leeds," 123.
6. Pamela Dale, "Special Education at Starcross Before 1948," *History of Education* 36, no. 1 (2007): 17–44, 20.
7. Rebecca Wynter, "Pictures of Peter Pan: Institutions, Local Definitions of 'Mental Deficiency,' and the Filtering of Children in Early Twentieth-Century England," *Family and Community History* 18, no. 2 (November 2015): 122–138.
8. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London: Routledge, reprinted 2001), originally published as *Histoire de la Folie* (Paris: Plon, 1964); Andrew Scull, *Museums of Madness: The Social Organization of Insanity in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Allen Lane, 1979); Peter Bartlett, *The Poor Law of Lunacy: The Administration of Pauper Lunatics in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999); Joseph Melling and Bill Forsythe, eds., *Insanity, Institutions, and Society, 1800–1914: A Social History of Madness in Comparative Perspective* (London: Routledge, 1999).
9. David Wright, *Mental Disability in Victorian England: The Earlswood Asylum, 1847–1901* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001); Amy Rebok-Rosenthal, "Insanity, Family and Community in Late-Victorian Britain," in *Disabled Children Contested Caring, 1850–1979*, eds. A. Borsay and P. Dale (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), 29–42; Steven J. Taylor, *Child Insanity in England, 1845–1907* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Steven J. Taylor, "'She Was Frightened While Pregnant by a Monkey at the Zoo': Constructing the Mentally-Imperfect Child in Nineteenth-Century England," *Social History of Medicine* 30, no. 4 (November 2017): 748–766.
10. *British Library Newspapers*, "Care of the Feeble-Minded." Cambridge Independent Press, 12 March 1909, 7. <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/JF3240702317/DSLAB?u=leicester&sid=DSLAB&xid=dafcba9f>. Accessed 1 April 2019.
11. Taylor, *Child Insanity in England*.
12. See Taylor, *Child Insanity in England*, Introduction.

13. G. Newman, *Infant Mortality: A Social Problem* (London: Methuen, 1906), 7.
14. G. E. Shuttleworth, *Mentally Deficient Children: Their Treatment and Training* (London: H.K. Lewis, 1895), Preface.
15. See Taylor, *Child Insanity in England*, for a more comprehensive discussion of definitions.
16. Shuttleworth, *Mentally Deficient Children*, for more information on educational, see 72; industrial 90, and moral 96.
17. Shuttleworth, *Mentally Deficient Children*, 90.
18. *Ibid.*, 92.
19. Jackson, *Borderland of Imbecility*.
20. Shuttleworth, *Mentally Deficient Children*, 97–98.
21. A. Binet and T. Simon, *Mentally Defective Children* (London: Edward Arnold, 1914).
22. Binet and Simon, *Mentally Defective Children*, 10.
23. Wolfson Centre for Archival Research (Henceforth WCAR) SB/B11/1/1/1, Birmingham Education Committee, Special Schools Committee of the School Board Minutes, 10 February 1898–17 March 1903, 111.
24. WCAR, SB/B11/1/1/1, Special Schools Committee of the School Board Minutes, 10 February 1898–17 March 1903, 214.
25. Wynter, “Pictures of Peter Pan.”
26. Pamela Dale, “Implementing the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act,” *Social History of Medicine* 16, no. 3 (December 2003): 403–418.
27. “Care of the Feeble-Minded.” <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/JF3240702317/DSLAB?u=leicester&sid=DSLAB&xid=dafcba9f>. Accessed 1 April 2019.
28. The National Archives (Henceforth TNA), ED32/187, Sandwell Hall Prospectus.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*
31. TNA, ED32/187, Letter from Rev. Burden, 22 September 1906.
32. TNA, ED32/187, Sandwell Hall Prospectus.
33. The Times Digital Archive (Henceforth TDA), *The Times*, “The Rev. H. N. Burden,” 29 May 1930, 18. <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/CS302981821/DSLAB?u=leicester&sid=DSLAB&xid=25ab4767>. Accessed 1 April 2019.
34. TNA, Sandwell Hall Application to the Board of Education for Certificate, ED32/187.
35. TDA, *The Times*, “Dame Ellen Pinsent,” 21 October 1949, 7. <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/CS120277333/DSLAB?u=leicester&sid=DSLAB&xid=cee2dde0>. Accessed 1 April 2019.

36. WCAR, SB/B11/1/1/1, Special Schools Committee of the School Board Minutes, 10 February 1898–17 March 1903, 96 and 127.
37. Ibid.
38. M. MacDowall, *Simple Beginnings in the Training of Mentally Defective Children* (London: Local Government Press, 1919), Introduction.
39. TNA, ED32/187, Sandwell Hall Prospectus.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. For examples, see Cathy Smith, “Family, Community and the Victorian Asylum: A Case Study of the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum and Its Pauper Lunatics,” *Family and Community History* 9, no. 2 (November 2006): 109–124.
44. TNA, ED32/187, Copy of Memorandum of Interview Between Mrs. Pinsent, Rev. H. N. Burden and Mr. Tabor, 4 February 1907.
45. WCAR, SB/B11/1/1/1, Special Schools Committee of the School Board Minutes, 10 February 1898–17 March 1903, 218.
46. TNA, ED32/187, Copy of Memorandum of Interview Between Mrs. Pinsent, Rev. H. N. Burden, and Mr. Tabor, 4 February 1907.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. TNA, ED32/187, Letter from Mrs. Pinsent to the Board of Education, 19 March 1907.
53. Ibid.
54. WCAR, BCC1/BH/5/1/1/2, Special School Minute Book 2, 414.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., 333.
58. WCAR, BCC1/BH/5/1/1/1, Special School Minute Book 1, 122.
59. A similar argument for pauper lunatic asylums in the nineteenth century, see Andrew Scull, *Museums of Madness: The Social Organization of Insanity in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Allen Lane, 1979).
60. WCAR, BCC1/BH/5/1/1/1, Special School Minute Book 1, 280.
61. Ibid., 122.
62. Ibid., 105.
63. Wright, *Mental Disability in Victorian England*.
64. WCAR, BCC1/BH/5/1/1/1, Special School Minute Book 1, 141.
65. Ibid., 395.
66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.
68. WCAR, BCC1/BH/5/1/1/3, Special School Minute Book 3, 174.
69. TNA, ED32/187, Letter from the Board of Education to Rev. H. N. Burden, 27 May 1921.
70. TNA, ED32/187, Letter from Rev. H. N. Burden to the Board of Education, 30 June 1921.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

