

# HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

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**name:** Former Polkemmet State School  
**Address:** 196 Polkemmet East School Road PIMPINIO  
**Place Type:** School - State (public)  
**Citation Date:** 2022



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**Recommended Heritage Protection**      **VHR -**  
**HI -**  
**PS**  
**Yes**

## Integrity

Relatively high, although building has been relocated, and porch has been removed.

## History and Historical Context

In *A Brief History of the District of Polkemmet East* (1998) Gavin Simmons charts the settlement of the Polkemmet district and describes the hardships endured by selectors' children in obtaining an education:

*In the early 1900s school children living in the Polkemmet East area were forced to walk up to 4 miles each morning and afternoon to and from school. With the closest schools being Vectis East School No. 1781,*

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*Pimpinio West School No. 3329 and West Wail School No. 3329. During the wetter months of the year traveling to school became near impossible, on the muddy dirt tracks, and many children missed school days on end until roads became suitable for travel. This disrupted children's learning and disadvantaged their education to such a point that the parents of children in the Polkemmet East area believed that area required a school of its own. [1]*

By 1905 an application to the Department of Education was submitted by Mr Abel Simmons, on behalf of twelve families, to erect a school for the children of the Polkemmet district. To give further weight to the application a 3 acre parcel of land owned by Thomas Hallam (being Lot 84A, Parish of Quantong) was offered free of charge as a site to establish the school. The application was supported by Mr W Henderson, the newly appointed Inspector of the Horsham District for the Department of Education, who noted at least '19 school aged children resided within 2 miles of the [proposed] school and a further 10 beyond that distance might attend' [2]

Simmons records that while the parents had originally planned to construct a school building from sun dried bricks, the Education Department did not support this proposal. Instead, an old portable school building formerly located at the Vectis East State School was acquired. The timber building measured 24 ft by 14 ft with a two-roomed living quarters attached (an additional room had been removed prior and attached to the new Vectis East school house). It was used at the time of purchase as a fowl house and stables and was relocated to Polkemmet and refurbished, with the internal partitions removed to create one large classroom. [3]

The Polkemmet School opened on the 1st April 1907, with an attendance of 20 pupils. The first headmistress was Miss Nellie McDonnell, however her period of tenure was all of four months and she was replaced in September by Miss Frusher. An article in the *Horsham Times* describes the farewell party and notes that the school is 'only a new one, starting at Easter, with no seating accommodation, but now compared most favorably with other district schools, and great credit was due to all who promoted having such a school built for the education of their children'. [4]

Gradual repairs to the school were undertaken with small grants from the Department and funds raised from barn dances and euchre parties. In 1909 R Sisson won a tender to renovate the building and it was painted in the summer of that year. Entrance gates were erected in 1910, a galvanized-iron shelter shed constructed in 1911, a timber floor laid in the school building in 1912 and a front porch added in 1914. The school was renamed Polkemmet East State School No. 3541 in 1912.

By 1920 the condition of the old school building was so poor that it was sold to Gus Dumesny for £30 and a new school building acquired for the site. The building of c.1880s in construction was relocated from the McKenzie Creek State School and was slightly smaller than the previous one (measuring 22 ft by 14 ft). A new porch and chimney were erected once the building was relocated to its current site.

At its peak in 1921 the school had twenty-four pupils; however attendance dropped to 6 pupils in 1923 prompting to the closure of the school at the end of 1924. This decision was reversed following the closure of Vectis East and Pimpinio West State Schools, with the former Pimpinio Head Teacher Bertha Rutherford transferred to Polkemmet East and classes recommenced in May 1925 with 13 pupils. [5]

Further alterations to the school were undertaken in the mid 20th century, including the construction of a verandah on the west elevation. The verandah was later enclosed and a concrete floor laid in 1946.

Attendance at the school gradually declined from the 1930s and by 1951 classes were temporarily suspended until 1952. The relocation of Head Teacher Mr Rowland Taylor was felt deeply by the school community and his transfer saw the school un-staffed and its pupil base diminished due to the loss of the Taylor children. The school was officially closed on 13 May 1959 with the Polkemmet – Horsham bus transporting the children of the Polkemmet district to the Horsham West State School. [6]

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Gus Dumesny purchased the subject site and the former school building from the Education Department in September 1968.

[1] Simmons, *A Brief History of the District of Polkemmet*, 1998, np

[2] Simmons, 1998, np.

[3] Blake, *Vision and Realisation: a centenary history of state education in Victoria*, 1973, p. 273; Simmons, 1998, np

[4] *Horsham Times*, 24 September 1907, p. 4

[5] Simmons, np

[6] Ibid.

## Description

### Physical Description

Timber framed, timber clad building on timber stumps, gable roof clad in corrugated sheet metal, no eaves overhang, two roof ventilators. Paired double hung timber sash window and single door to north elevation; brick chimney to west elevation. Large multipane paired timber windows with highlights to south elevation.

Internally lined with tongue and groove boards to ceiling and walls; timber floorboards.

There is a 1998 bronze plaque on a boulder, located at the western property boundary which notes 'Site of Polkemmet East School No. 3541 / Opened 10 April 1907 / Officially closed 13 May 1959'.

### Physical Condition

Fair to poor condition. The building is not currently weatherproof and has deteriorated stumps, weatherboards and other building elements. In 2022 it was leaning away from its external chimney.

### Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

Relevant HERCON Criteria

*Criterion A:* Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history. (as a marker of the changing (increasing) requirements of educational facilities in the district and as the focus for a regional community as an educational facility in the early/ mid 20thC)

*Criterion D:* Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places or objects. (typical design, configuration and materials for a small scale classroom building in the early twentieth century, adapted from a c1880s building)

*Criterion G:* Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. (unlikely to retain strong local attachment as it has been closed since 1959)

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## Comparative Analysis

*School (former) – No 3398, 158 Riverside Road, Riverside, Hermes no. 186111:* Very similar configuration and style, but later date (1901)

*School (former) – No 1840, Kalkee School Road, Kalkee, Hermes no. 186134:* Similar configuration and style, date not confirmed.

## Statement of Significance

### What is significant?

The elements of heritage value of the former Polkemmet East School, 196 Polkemmet East School Road, Pimpinio, include:

. External form and materials of the relocated c1880s building – weatherboard cladding, corrugated sheet metal roof, timber framed multi paned windows, and brick chimney – relocated here in 1920 and used as a schoolhouse until 1959.

### How is it significant?

The former Polkemmet East school is of historic, representative, and associative significance to Horsham Rural City.

### Why is it significant?

The former Polkemmet East School is:

. Of local historical significance, illustrating the growing (and then waning) need for educational facilities in small rural communities outside Horsham in the 1920-1959 period. It was a focus for community activities and education of families in the Polkemmet district until its closure in 1959. (Criterion A)

. Of local representative significance, as a relatively intact example of a school classroom of a c1880s schoolhouse, relocated from McKenzie Creek for use here in the early to mid-twentieth century. (Criterion D)

## Recommendations 2022

<b>External Paint Controls</b>	No
<b>Internal Alteration Controls</b>	No
<b>Tree Controls</b>	No
<b>Fences &amp; Outbuildings</b>	No
<b>Prohibited uses may be permitted</b>	No
<b>Incorporated Plan</b>	-
<b>Aboriginal Heritage Place</b>	No

## References

Literature title: Horsham Times Newspaper

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**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:**

**Literature publisher:**

**Literature year:**

**Literature title:** A Brief History of the District of Polkemmet East

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:** Simmons, Gavin

**Literature publisher:** self published

**Literature year:** 1998

**Literature title:** Vision and Realisation: A Centenary History of State Education in Victoria Vol. 2

**Literature type:** General Reference

**Literature author:** Blake L.J (ed.)

**Literature publisher:** Melbourne, Education Department of Victoria

**Literature year:** 1973

**This information is provided for guidance only and does not supersede official documents, particularly the planning scheme. Planning controls should be verified by checking the relevant municipal planning scheme.**