

Historic Building Appraisal
Main Building, Diocesan Boys' School
No. 131 Argyle Street, Mong Kok, Kowloon

The construction of the Main Building of Diocesan Boys' School (DBS) (拔萃男書院) at Argyle Street commenced in 1924 and was completed in 1929 to replace the old school premises at Bonham Road (般含道). DBS originated in 1869 with Diocesan Home and Orphanage (DHO) (曰字樓孤子院) for English, Eurasian, Chinese and other students of both sexes. In 1892, DHO was renamed Diocesan School and Orphanage (DSO) and, in the same year, it has become a boys' school and all of its girl students were transferred to Fairlea School at Bonham Road. In 1902 it was renamed Diocesan Boys' School and Orphanage (DBSO). The present name "Diocesan Boys' School" was used since the early 1930s. From 1926 to 1932, the school was housed in the temporary premises at No 142 Prince Edward West (later used by the old Kowloon Police Headquarters, Grade 2). *Historical Interest*

Later in 1937, Japanese invasion broke out in China, and at once DBS showed its concern towards the Chinese people. A DBS Shoe Shining Club (拔萃擦鞋團) was organised to raise fund for the Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party 國民黨) in 1938 with the slogan "to save our country by polishing shoes" (擦鞋救國). Boys went to schools around Hong Kong polishing shoes for both students and teachers, charging H.K.\$0.10 for each service provided. As a result, a total of HK\$277.06 was raised to support the Chinese army. During the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945), the school was used as a military hospital. Although the Japanese surrendered in August 1945, the school was still occupied by Japanese patients. It was not until March 1946 that DBS took over the school premise, and the school resumed its educational role after restoration.

The main school building is built in the grand Italianate style featuring twin *campanile* bell towers, a main entrance portico, arcaded and colonnaded verandahs, triangular pediments, and Chinese pan-and-roll tile pitched roofs. The walls are painted white, with the plinth and architectural features highlighted in light grey giving the building a pristine appearance. The plan is strictly symmetrical with a triple cross shape formed by extended wings on either side of a central block. The building has three stories with a lowered ground floor. The interior of the school building is simple and functional. *Architectural Merit*

Buildings in the Italianate style are quite rare in Hong Kong and the Diocesan Boys' School therefore must be considered as a valuable piece of built heritage and part of Hong Kong's history. Inevitably, over the years, there have been some *Rarity, Built Heritage Value &*

alterations and additions but in spite of this the School retains much of its *Authenticity* authenticity.

The social value of the school, or “DBS” as it is usually referred to, lies in the *Social Value* historical role it has played in education in Hong Kong. Exemplary old boys who *& Local* have filled leading positions in the community include Dr. Sun Yat-sen (孫中山) *Interest* and Sir Robert H. Kotewall (羅旭龢) who studied at the Bonham Road school premises, whereas Sir Oswald V. Cheung (張奧偉), Prof. Sir David Todd (達安輝), Prof. Lo King-man (盧景文) and Mr. Hanson Y. Huang (黃賢) studied at the Argyle Street premises, just to name a few examples.

The school has a good reputation and is well known in the community. Among the many educational institutions in Hong Kong, DBS holds a high place, both for the quality of its instruction and the emphasis it has laid upon the building up of character among its students.

The Main Building of Diocesan Boys’ School is within walking distance of *Group Value* other historic buildings, such as Maryknoll Convent School (瑪利諾修院學校, Declared Monument), St. Teresa’s Church (聖德肋撒堂, Grade 1), and the Kowloon Hospital (九龍醫院, Grade 2 or 3).