

# THE CASE FOR NURSERY SCHOOLS

*BEING THE REPORT OF A COMMITTEE  
CONSISTING OF THE FOLLOWING:*

R. F. CHOLMELEY, C.B.E., M.A. (*Chairman*)  
PERCY ALDEN, M.A.  
G. S. M. ELLIS, M.A.  
Sir BENJAMIN GOTT, M.A.  
FREDA HAWTREY  
A. MANSBRIDGE, M.A.  
T. PERCY NUNN, M.A., D.Sc.  
R. H. TAWNEY, B.A.  
J. A. WHITE, M.B.E.

*Hon. Sec.:*

A. J. LYNCH

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## PREFATORY NOTE

NO one who has studied the Report issued by this Committee in 1927 (*The Next Step in National Education*: University of London Press) can be surprised at the subject chosen for our next inquiry. *The Next Step* was directed to arousing the interest and the conscience of the public by setting out in a popular form what the Hadow Report on the Education of the Adolescent has demonstrated—the urgent need for making better provision for the education of boys and girls after the age of eleven. The object of the present inquiry is to discover and explain under what conditions the children who come into the Elementary Schools are to have a chance of profiting by any education whatever.

The problem that we have set ourselves to consider is primarily the problem of what is sometimes called the Pre-School Child. We have been inevitably led to examine, along with the question what should be done for the Pre-School Child, the manner in which any conclusions we might reach should affect the care of the younger children now included in the general educational system: the Nursery School

cannot be treated without reference to its influence on the Infants' School.

There is still a widespread unwillingness to regard the needs of children under five as constituting an educational problem at all. We believe that in the light of the modern understanding of those needs, and even more in the light of what is being done in the places—so lamentably few considering what might be accomplished—where they are systematically provided for, this attitude of mind is demonstrably wrong. If it is wrong, we claim that the plea for the Nursery School ought to be irresistible, and that we ought not to rest until it has found—not merely here and there where some crying necessity is too obvious to be ignored, but everywhere—a recognised place in our educational system.

Much is said from time to time about filling up gaps in the educational system: that indeed was, in part, the theme of the Hadow Report. But here is a case in which the educational system is hobbled at the very beginning of the race. This is not merely a matter of bodily health. "The School Medical Service (see p. 11) is a receiver of damaged goods, and spends most of its time in patching them up"; but what about the minds of those "damaged goods"? It is a great mistake to think of the Nursery School idea

merely—or even mainly—in terms of health, or to be satisfied with leaving its practical development to a few enthusiasts, or to the most provident Local Authorities, or to the mitigation of life in a slum. It belongs fundamentally to the question whether a civilised community is possible or not. Perhaps it is not; perhaps, in the enormous and complicated social structure in which we now live, that light will never penetrate everywhere. It is not a comfortable thought; but at any rate the least that we can do about it is to remember that the price of civilisation is responsibility and to see that we pay our way.

We desire to express our thanks to Miss Margaret McMillan, Miss Winifred Organ, Miss Grace Owen, Miss Lord, Miss Bullen, Mr. Thomas Wall, Dr. Ralph Crowley, and Mr. Thos. Boyce, M.A., B.Sc. (Director of Education, Bradford), for their ready and willing help in this inquiry; at the same time we desire to say that they are not in any way responsible for the conclusions arrived at.

R. F. CHOLMELEY.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### I. THE PROVISION OF NURSERY SCHOOLS

1. It is of urgent importance that Local Education Authorities should make adequate provision for children under five, particularly in crowded and slum areas. The Board of Education should call immediately the attention of Local Education Authorities in town areas to the desirability of making such provision, and should request them at an early date to arrange for so doing.

2. The form which such provision should, wherever possible, assume is that of an open-air nursery school designed to provide for the needs of children between the ages of two and seven, and with this object :

(a) The Education Act (1921) should be amended in such a way that it would be compulsory for every Local Authority to provide the number of Nursery Schools required to meet the needs of their district.

(b) Nursery Schools should be removed from the category of Special Services. A special Code of Regulations should be devised to cover the education and physical care of children under the age of seven, based on the former Regulations for Nursery

Schools and incorporating such parts of the Elementary Code as are properly applicable to children under seven.

(c) All new schools provided by the Local Education Authorities for children under seven should take the form of open-air nursery schools.

(d) Since many existing Infants' School buildings are at present unsuitable for young children, it is desirable that, in general, new schools should be provided for children under seven, the existing school buildings to be used, wherever possible, for other educational purposes. In the meantime, Authorities should take steps to provide in the Infants' School, as far as the limitations imposed by unsuitable buildings allow, the amenities and standard of staffing desirable in Nursery Schools.

## II. STAFFING AND PERSONNEL

1. Schools for children under seven should be staffed and organised on lines resembling, as closely as possible, those of the best Nursery Schools, and special attention should be paid to the further development within them of conditions favourable to the growth and physical well-being of young children.

2. Every such school should be in charge of

a fully-trained and certificated Superintendent, to be responsible for the conduct and efficiency of the school.

3. Every group of not more than forty children in such a school should be in charge of a fully-trained and certificated teacher.

4. A staff of suitable helpers between the ages of sixteen and eighteen should be provided in each school. These helpers should be regarded as receiving preparation for various nursing and domestic avocations, and should be aided where necessary by maintenance grants.

5. Provision should be made for a close co-operation between the Nursery Schools and the Post-Primary Schools with a view to associating the former with courses of practical instruction in child-welfare in the latter.

### III. TRAINING

Two types of training courses are proposed both by the Nursery Schools Association and the National Union of Teachers—a two-year and a three-year course. Of these the three-year course is the more desirable, and is particularly necessary for Superintendents.

### IV. BUILDINGS

Every Nursery School should be provided with a garden or other suitable open space, with



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school buildings consisting of simple and cheerful shelters, with ample water-supply and bathing accommodation, and with facilities for meals and sleep.

#### V. MEDICAL INSPECTION

Provision should be made for regular medical inspection to be carried out by the School Medical Service of the area in which the Nursery School is situated.

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THE FRONT OF THE SCHOOL.  
(Note the open doors and verandah.)



HAY-TIME.  
THE LILYCROFT NURSERY SCHOOL, BRADFORD.