

# THE CASE FOR NURSERY SCHOOLS

BEING THE REPORT OF A COMMITTEE  
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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.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFATORY NOTE . . . . .	v
RECOMMENDATIONS . . . . .	ix

## CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING OF THE NURSERY SCHOOL IDEA . . . . .	I
---	---

## CHAPTER II

### THE PRE-SCHOOL CHILD

I. DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM . . . . .	35
II. WHAT IS BEING DONE . . . . .	36
(A) BY THE PUBLIC HEALTH AUTHORITY . . . . .	37
(i) HEALTH VISITORS AND HOME NURS- ING . . . . .	37
(ii) INFANT WELFARE CENTRES . . . . .	39
(iii) RESIDENTIAL HOMES AND DAY NURSERIES . . . . .	39
(B) BY THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY . . . . .	40
(i) INFANTS' SCHOOLS . . . . .	40
(ii) NURSERY SCHOOLS . . . . .	43
III. THE NEED FOR GREATER PROVISION FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE . . . . .	45

## CHAPTER III

## THE NURSERY SCHOOL

	PAGE
I. THE AIM AND FUNCTION OF THE NURSERY SCHOOL . . . . .	53
II. WHAT THE NURSERY SCHOOL INCLUDES . . . . .	64
1. GARDENS AND SHELTERS . . . . .	64
2. FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT . . . . .	67
3. DIET . . . . .	69
4. CURRICULUM . . . . .	72
5. STAFF . . . . .	75
6. INSPECTION . . . . .	75
III. CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIONS AND CRITICISMS . . . . .	80

## CHAPTER IV

## EXAMPLES OF NURSERY SCHOOLS

I. IN ENGLAND AND U.S.A. . . . .	89
II. DIFFERENT TYPES OF ORGANISATION—	
1. STAFFING . . . . .	101
2. BUILDINGS . . . . .	103
3. NUMBERS OF PUPILS AND COST OF MAINTENANCE . . . . .	105

## CHAPTER V

THE PLACE OF THE NURSERY SCHOOL IN  
NATIONAL EDUCATION

	PAGE
I. THE NURSERY SCHOOL AND THE INFANTS' SCHOOL . . . . .	109
<p style="padding-left: 40px;">Nurture should be included in the education of all children under seven.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">A change of school should be avoided for all children at the age of five.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The Nursery (or Voluntary) School should form part of the Infants' (or Compulsory) School.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Consequent changes in the Infants' School.</p>	
II. THE RELATION OF THE NURSERY SCHOOL TO—	
1. NURSERY CLASSES . . . . .	118
2. DAY NURSERIES . . . . .	123
3. CHILD WELFARE WORK . . . . .	124
4. THE POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL . . . . .	125

## CHAPTER VI

THE STAFFING OF THE NURSERY SCHOOL  
OF THE FUTURE

I. QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING OF STAFF	129
II. THE SCALE OF STAFFING . . . . .	140
III. THE RELATION OF THE NURSERY SCHOOL STAFF WITH THE STAFF OF THE POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL . . . . .	142

CHAPTER VII

SOME FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

	PAGE
PRESENT COSTS, MAIN EXPENSES, ESTIMATES ON NEW BASIS . . . . .	144
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	151

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PLAN OF BIERLEY HOUSE ESTATE SCHOOL, BRADFORD . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
LILYCROFT NURSERY SCHOOL:	
SHOWING FRONT OF SCHOOL, OPEN DOORS AND VERANDAH, FACING SOUTH ON TO A GARDEN . . . . .	I
HAY-TIME . . . . .	I
JIM (AGE 2 YEARS) . . . . .	52
JIM (AGE 3½ YEARS) . . . . .	52
THE NURSERY "DINNER" . . . . .	52
 MCMILLAN NURSERY SCHOOL:	
THE RIBSTALL . . . . .	80
 SUTTON NURSERY SCHOOL:	
AT WORK . . . . .	112
AFTER REST-HOUR . . . . .	112



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



HAY-TIME.  
THE LILYCROFT NURSERY SCHOOL, BRADFORD.

# THE CASE FOR NURSERY SCHOOLS

## CHAPTER I

### THE BEGINNING OF THE NURSERY SCHOOL IDEA

#### I

“ . . . But the great attraction to myself and the numerous strangers who now continually visited the establishment was the new Infant School, the progress of which, from its opening, I daily watched and superintended until I could prepare the mind of the master whom I had selected for this, in my estimation, the most important charge,—knowing that if the foundation were not truly laid, it would be in vain to expect a satisfactory structure.” (*Life of Robert Owen by Himself*, Bohn’s Edition, p. 191.)

OWEN’S words were written in 1857 with reference to the establishment, in 1816, at New Lanark of the first Infant School in Britain, where, as he says, every child above one year old was daily in attendance. The main occupations of the children were dancing, music, and healthy exercise. “The children were not to be annoyed with books; but were to be taught the uses and nature and qualities of the common things around them by familiar conversation when the

## 2 THE CASE FOR NURSERY SCHOOLS

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children's curiosity was excited so as to induce them to ask questions respecting them."

Previously, in 1800, Owen had experimented with schools for young children, often as young as six years of age, working in the mills, but it was not until sixteen years later that he turned his attention to schools for children below six. As he believed that man's character was formed *for* and not *by* himself, he also believed it necessary to begin with children at as young an age as possible.

Owen, however, was not the first to devise a school of this kind. In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, Englishmen began to hear of the Swiss reformers, Pestalozzi, Père Girard, and Fellenberg; some English educationists visited Switzerland, amongst them Bell (1816) and Owen himself (1818). As Professor Adamson says, the doctrine that learners must make a first-hand acquaintance with that which they are learning, instead of merely studying subjects at second hand through books or the teacher's verbal description, may or may not be the doctrine which Pestalozzi called intuition, but it was the idea which animated and determined the instruction given in the New Lanark Infant School.<sup>1</sup> With Owen's experiment a new chapter in English education began. The difficulties of

<sup>1</sup> *History of Education*, Adamson, p. 259.



our present situation have grown out of Owen's success. "From 1824 onwards schools for children under seven years of age have formed an integral part of English primary education." Continental opinion, on the other hand, has never accepted formal schooling for such young children, and their play-schools and Crèches have always been different in character.

Historically, the first institution of this kind was founded in 1779 by Johann Friedrich Oberlin (1740-1826), the Protestant pastor of the village of Waldbach in Alsace. It was opened in connection with a "knitting school" for older children, also founded by Oberlin, where children were taught sewing and where stories were told and object-lessons given by means of maps of the district and of coloured pictures taken from Biblical and natural history. The idea of combining with this school a refuge for small children whose mothers were occupied in the fields seems to have been due to Oberlin's maid-servant, Louise Scheppler, under whose charge the first school was opened, and who carried on the work till her death in 1837. The experiment excited much interest, and in 1802 a similar institution was started in Germany (Detmold), in which children up to four years of age were received from June till October when the mothers were at work in the fields.

## 4 THE CASE FOR NURSERY SCHOOLS

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In Germany the first twenty years of the century saw the foundation of Bewahranstalten, to which more detailed reference will be made later in this Report, in all parts of the country. These schools were started and maintained by private persons, or by religious philanthropic societies, both Catholic and Protestant, such as the Oberlin societies founded in memory of Oberlin himself to carry on his work, or by various other charitable agencies, especially the many women's societies which played so large a part in German philanthropic life. Many of these institutions had a distinctly religious aim; indeed, this was so with Oberlin's original school, and, in places where religious feeling was strong, it led to a certain rivalry between Catholics and Protestants in founding them. In Germany, however, as in this country, the change in industrial conditions, and the consequent employment of women away from the home, first opened the eyes of the benevolent public to the need of making some provision for the children of working mothers.<sup>1</sup>

Closely related to the Bewahranstalten in Germany was the Kindergarten, which had a social as well as an educational aim and origin.

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Consultative Committee upon School Attendance of Children below the Age of Five, 1908 (Miss M. B. Synge's Memorandum).

This was the creation of Froebel, who was the first to draw up a system of education through the senses, based on organised play, for children up to six years of age. He was the first also to declare that such education could not be carried out exclusively by the mother. The first Kindergarten was opened at Blankenburg in 1837, and three years later Froebel founded the first Training College for Kindergarten teachers. The movement spread, and some sixteen or eighteen Kindergartens were opened in Froebel's lifetime. In Austria, the Kindergarten found fruitful soil, and by an order of the Ministry of Education in 1872 it was recognised as part of the educational system of that country.

As Froebel explained it, the Kindergarten was to supplement and widen home-training and not to be a substitute for it, and was intended for all classes. In practice, however, in Germany the Kindergarten was used mainly by the poorer children whose parents were at work.

The idea of the Crèche began in France. The first Crèche was founded in Paris by M. Firmin Marbeau and opened in November 1844. It was designed wholly for the children of working women. It was not free, and was intended, not as a shelter for the children of the indigent poor, but to help those mothers who were obliged to earn their living by working outside their homes.

## 6 THE CASE FOR NURSERY SCHOOLS

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Two years later, 14 Crèches were opened in Paris and other large towns. Official recognition of the movement was not secured till 1869; but by 1875 there were 29 Crèches in Paris, 6 in the suburbs, and 100 in other Departments. By 1907 there were 68 in Paris, 44 in the suburbs, and 322 in other Departments. They are now regarded as an essential element in the social and industrial arrangements of the nation.

In Germany the first Crèche (Krippe) was opened in Dresden in 1851. One had, however, been started in Vienna two years before. By 1907 Krippen existed in most German towns, and they occupy an important place in the life of the German nation.

In Belgium the establishment of Crèches also dates from the early days of the nineteenth century. In 1845 the Crèche Mère was founded in Brussels, although Infant Schools for children between the ages of two and six had received official recognition in 1833.<sup>1</sup>

Thus there were in Belgium the Crèches and the Jardins des Enfants, in France the Crèches and the Écoles Maternelles, and in Germany the Krippen and the Bewahranstalten (with their close ally the Kindergarten). The Crèches in each country took children from the ages of six weeks to two years, whereas the other institutions

<sup>1</sup> See Consultative Committee's Report, 1908.

provided for the ages from two to six—which latter was the age of compulsory attendance. There was naturally no hard-and-fast distinction about these ages, and frequently there was overlapping. Twenty years ago it was estimated that half the children between two and five in Belgium, a quarter of those in France, and in Germany percentages varying in different areas from two to ten, attended some institution of the kind.

In the United States of America a few private Kindergartens were established between 1858 and 1870; the first of a public character in the latter year at Boston. Since that time the system has grown, and its influence is said to have extended to every State. In a community so vast and varied as the United States it is not easy to arrive at exact figures, but even a quarter of a century ago it was estimated that 300,000 children under school age were attending schools of the kindergarten type.

Although James Buchanan, who, for some time, had charge of Owen's New Lanark School, came to Westminster to establish a similar school, it cannot be said that there was any coherent movement in this country comparable to the movement which spread so rapidly in Europe to provide for the children of mothers who spent their day in work away from home.

The principal causes which delayed development

in England were, it is probable, two. First, that married women in this country were not thought to be so largely employed in industry away from home as on the Continent, and particularly in Germany; second, there was the fact that, in the earlier days of the public administration of education in this country and, indeed, up to comparatively recent times, children between the ages of three and five were allowed to attend school if their parents so desired, and the schools used commonly to make provision for such children. Many parents, of course, preferred to keep their children at home but, when the Consultative Committee reported in 1908, they found that during the fifteen years or so previous to their inquiry at least a third of all the children of England between the ages of three and five were on the registers of the public Elementary Schools.

Public opinion, and in particular the opinion of medical men and of educationists, in the later years of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth centuries, began to suggest that a public Elementary School was not the proper place for these very young children, and, soon after the passing of the Education Act of 1902, some of the new Local Education Authorities began to take that objection seriously. It was known that the lower age-limit for compulsory attendance was higher in most civilised

countries than in England, though little attention was given to the arrangements made in these countries for children below the age of compulsory attendance. This knowledge, in conjunction with the objections expressed by medical men against the practice of keeping children below the age of five years at school, led to careful investigations into the subject.

In 1905 the Board of Education published the reports of five women inspectors on the position of children under five years of age in public Elementary Schools. The result of this inquiry, and of others undertaken by the Local Authorities themselves, led to a change in the regulations of the Code. The following words were introduced: "Where the Local Education Authority have so determined in the case of any school maintained by them, children who are under five years of age may be refused admission to that school." It was explained that various medical and educational objections to the school attendance of very young children had been raised, and the Board's opinion was that the matter was one that should be left to the decision of the Local Authorities.

The Prefatory Memorandum to the 1905 Code put the matter as follows:

The extent to which parents in any locality desire that very young children should attend

school and the weight which should be attached to the wishes of the parents in this matter are no doubt sufficiently well known to the Local Education Authority to enable them to deal on their own responsibility with the question of admitting or excluding children under five years of age. In these circumstances the Board will now give the Local Education Authority complete discretion on this point, and it will be held under Article 53 that a direction of the Local Education Authority to the effect that children under five shall be refused admission to any particular school or schools is a reasonable ground for excluding such children from the school or schools concerned. If the Local Education Authority so wish, different parts of their area may be treated differently in this respect.

There the matter has rested, with but little alteration up to the present time, but no special provision, other than the quite inadequate one to which we shall presently refer, has been made for the children so displaced.

The discretionary power thus bestowed by the Board on Local Education Authorities introduced a diversity in different areas. Some Authorities, realising the importance of the problem they had to decide and desirous of doing the best for the children, retained them at school; others, guided by financial considerations, excluded the pre-school children altogether, on the ground that



accommodation was deficient or that a reduction in staff would thus be made possible ; others again excluded them for no apparent reason. The net result of this, together with the change in the social habits of the people which accompanied it, and reinforced it, is seen in the decrease of numbers attending school. The number of children attending school between the ages of three and five was at a maximum in 1900, when 622,498 out of 1,435,605 attended, a percentage of 43·36. Since that year there has been a steady decline both in the number attending and in the percentage, until in 1926 the actual number attending was 181,492 out of an estimated child population of 1,413,217, or a percentage of under 13. Thus in a little over a quarter of a century the percentage of children between the ages of three and five who were pupils in the schools fell by more than 30. This fact should be read in conjunction with the statement made by the School Medical Officer for London, and quoted by Sir George Newman in his Report on the Health of the School Child (1927), that the School Medical Service is a receiver of damaged goods and spends most of its time in patching them up.

## II

Before 1905 the mind of the country had become disturbed by the high rate of infantile

mortality, that is, by the relatively large number of babies who died before they reached their first birthday. Not only was it high, but it had gradually risen, particularly in urban areas, during the preceding thirty years, till it reached a figure that gave cause for serious alarm. By 1902, at the close of the Boer War, infantile mortality, from all causes, stood in urban areas at 180 per 1,000 for males and 149·2 per 1,000 for females; the corresponding figures for rural areas, though sufficiently high, were only 138·8 and 111 respectively, giving for the country as a whole a figure of about 160 per 1,000. The figure for 1926 was 70·2 per 1,000, and this reduction indicates, though much remains to be done, the efforts which have been made during the last five-and-twenty years to deal with this problem.

Another disturbing fact was brought to light by the comparatively large number of recruits rejected from the Army between 1893 and 1902, a period which, in its latter part, coincided with the South African War. This was the alarming amount of physical disability which existed at maturity. The table on the opposite page gives the figures.<sup>1</sup>

These were significant figures. Discussing them, the Director-General of the Army Medical

<sup>1</sup> Report on Physical Deterioration, 1904.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Year.	Number of recruits inspected.	Number rejected on inspection.	Number rejected within three months of inspection.	Number rejected during the year under two years' service.	% to Col. 2.	% to Col. 3.	% to Col. 4.
1893	64,110	25,999	342	963	40.6	0.5	1.5
1894	61,985	24,705	369	770	30.9	0.6	1.2
1895	55,698	22,548	368	952	40.5	0.7	1.7
1896	54,574	22,698	413	999	41.6	0.8	1.8
1897	59,986	22,370	575	996	37.3	1.0	1.7
1898	66,502	22,983	387	983	34.6	0.6	1.5
1899	68,087	22,071	433	1,003	32.4	0.6	1.5
1900	84,402	23,105	640	1,514	27.4	0.8	1.8
1901	76,750	21,522	1,014	3,825	28.0	1.3	4.9
1902	87,609	26,913	1,308	2,254	30.7	1.5	2.5
1893- 1902	679,703	234,914	5,849	14,259	34.6	0.9	2.1

Service said: "The rejection of one out of every three men examined by the medical officer points clearly to the poorness of the human material available for Army purposes." Adding together the rates for the three classes of rejections referred to in the table, we find that 37.6 per cent. of the 679,703 men examined during the decennial period proved to be unfit for military service. This percentage of rejections does not, however, represent the whole extent of the physical unfitness existing among men wishing to become soldiers and offering themselves for enlistment. The Inspector-General of Recruit-

ing stated in his Report for 1902 that it must be borne in mind, when examining these totals, that they did not represent anything like the number of rejections of candidates for enlistment in the Army. "A large number of men were rejected by the recruiting sergeants and recruiting officers, and such men in consequence were never medically examined, and did not appear in any returns. In the decennial period under consideration we have only been able to account for 37.6 per cent. of rejections from official statistics"; but according to Sir Frederick Maurice's estimate, 60 per cent. of the men who offered themselves were unfit for service. No official record was kept of men turned away; but there was reason to believe that the number was a large one, though whether it was sufficiently high to bring the figures of the rejected to 60 per cent. we have no means of knowing.

It was stated at the time, that of the 77 per cent. who lived in towns, about 25 per cent. (at least 6,000,000) appeared, from trustworthy investigations, to be not only poor but living in actual poverty, so as to be unable to rear their children under conditions favourable to health and physical fitness. The bulk of the men who sought enlistment belonged to that section of the population, and we may conclude that most of the rejections arose from causes indicating the

operation of agencies antagonistic to healthy physical development.

These disclosures aroused attention, and accordingly, in 1904, an Inter-Departmental Committee was appointed whose terms of reference included an inquiry into the allegations concerning the deterioration of certain classes of the population as shown by the large percentage of rejections for physical causes of recruits for the Army, and also a consideration of the manner in which the medical profession could best be consulted on the subject.

These terms of reference were subsequently enlarged as follows :

1. To determine, with the aid of such counsel as the medical profession are able to give, the steps that should be taken to furnish the Government and the nation at large with periodical data for an accurate comparative estimate of the health and physique of the people.

2. To indicate generally the causes of such physical deterioration as does exist in certain classes.

3. To point out the means by which it can most effectually be diminished.

Quite early in their investigations the Committee stated that they were not insensible of much that was grave in the state of things disclosed.

Professor D. J. Cunningham, of the University of Edinburgh, and Dr. Eichholz, who were among the principal witnesses examined by the Committee, while agreeing that there was little evidence to support the belief that there was any general progressive deterioration, pointed to certain symptoms that were disquieting. The former spoke of the manner in which poverty, with its squalor, its bad feeding, and its attendant ignorance about the proper nurture of the child, depressed the physical standard of the lower classes; while the latter said that with regard to physical degeneracy, the children frequenting the poorer schools of London and the large towns betrayed a most serious condition of affairs calling for ameliorative and arresting measures, the most impressive features being the apathy of parents as regards the school, the lack of parental care of children, the poor physique, powers of endurance, and educational attainments of the children attending school. Dr. Eichholz added: "There . . . is every reason to anticipate *rapid* amelioration of physique so soon as improvement occurs in external conditions, particularly as regards food, clothing, overcrowding, cleanliness, drunkenness, and the spread of common practical knowledge of home management."

The findings of the Committee numbered

more than fifty, but the chief among them were :

(a) That a systematised inspection of children at school should be imposed as a public duty on every School Authority.

(b) That definite provision should be made by various Local Authorities for dealing with the question of underfed children.

(c) That wherever it was thought desirable, owing to the employment of married women in factories, or for other reasons, municipal Crèches should be established where girls over fourteen might be made to attend occasionally, and where the teaching of infant management to such girls should be eligible for aid from the grant for public education.

(d) That physical exercise of a recreational character should be encouraged for girls as well as for boys.

This Report and its findings led at once to much activity. A special Inter-Departmental Committee on the Medical Inspection and Feeding of Children attending Public Elementary Schools was set up and reported in 1905. With regard to Medical Inspection, the Committee noted in great detail the efforts that had already been made in various parts of the country to carry it out, mainly on a voluntary basis. These efforts, however, were by no means

universal or uniform. Much was left to the teachers, to whom the School Medical Officer gave valuable support in any effort they might make to arouse the better feelings of the apathetic or negligent parent. As yet there was no systematised attempt to deal effectively with the question of school health. Indeed, the Committee appeared to pride itself upon the fact that hitherto in no urban area had it required more than one-tenth of a penny rate to carry out such arrangements as were then in being; generally, they said, the expenditure needed was not so much. It is only fair, however, to say that the Committee felt that the results—good so far as they went—left something to be desired, and much opening for improvement. "It is to be remembered," they observed, "that the Local Authority does not attempt treatment of the child's defects; it merely points out to the parent their existence, and, except in very rare cases, it has no power to force him to have the defect remedied." It was plain to those familiar with the facts that such arrangements were inadequate. The full medical inspection of elementary school-children came into operation in 1907, and was not extended to Secondary schools until 1918. While it was obligatory for Local Education Authorities to carry out inspection



the provision of treatment still remains optional.

With regard to underfed children, the Committee again duly noted the voluntary efforts of philanthropic bodies to meet this evil, and recommended that Local Education Authorities should as far as practicable co-operate with these bodies in the continuance of their work. They thought that any organisation for feeding children should be permanent, that meals should be given throughout the year at least as often as every school day, and that the most destitute children should be fed regularly rather than a large number irregularly. It was not desirable, they thought, that teachers should take part in serving or supervising children's meals, though they might assist in the selection of children to be fed. Above all, the meals were to be regarded as "relief." After several unsuccessful attempts to press forward a Bill in the House of Commons, a Provision of Meals Act was passed in 1906. It was, however, made free in 1909, but was still permissive and not obligatory.

The Committee's recommendation about the encouragement of physical exercises of a recreational character for girls as well as boys led to the revision of the Board of Education's syllabus of exercises to be used in schools.

But the existence of medical inspection without treatment, and the provision of school meals as a

relief measure, did not appreciably modify the condition of the Infants' School. Meanwhile, the establishment of Crèches or Day Nurseries now began to take on a greater significance. In 1908 there were already at least 77 Crèches in London, and, in all, 103 in Great Britain. This movement for the development of these, and for the establishment of new ones, was greatly helped by the formation, in 1906, of the National Society of Day Nurseries. The inadequacy of the provision of Crèches in this country may be gauged by comparing the number in England at that time with the 500 already in being in France. Even to-day there are only 99 Day Nurseries approved by the Ministry of Health, accommodating 3,364 children, although there are 150 Day Nurseries of some kind or other affiliated to the National Society. When it is remembered that the total estimated number of children below the age of five is 3,400,000, it will be evident that there is urgent need for much to be done in this direction.

This growing sense of the importance of nurture for young children determined the reference in April 1907 to the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education of the question of the school attendance of children below the age of five. The exact terms of the reference were :

To consider and advise the Board of Education in regard to the desirability or otherwise, both on educational and other grounds, of discouraging the attendance under the age of (say) five years on the assumption that, in the event of the change being found generally desirable, the moneys now payable by the Board of Education in the shape of grants in respect of the attendance of such children should still be payable to Local Education Authorities in greater relief of their expenditure in educating the children over five years of age.

The Committee took evidence in all from seven Medical Officers (including three connected with the Education Department of the London County Council), three representatives of Local Education Authorities, each of which had excluded from its schools children under five, three H.M.I.s, five head teachers from very widely distributed areas, as well as from a group of interested persons, including Miss Grace Owen, now honorary secretary of the Nursery Schools Association, and Miss Henland, at that time secretary of the National Society of Day Nurseries. Evidence was taken also from Scottish officials and teachers. Perhaps the most interesting and valuable documents at the disposal of the Committee were the reports of Miss M. B. Synge, who dealt with the provision made for young children both in France and Belgium, and

of Miss M. G. May, who dealt with the similar provision in Germany and Switzerland, both based upon first-hand knowledge, and from which much of the material in these pages is taken.

The Committee concentrated its attention on the following points: the need for making some public provision for infants whose home conditions were imperfect; the possible methods of dealing with such infants; the ideal institution for them; and the advantages to be derived from attendance at such an institution, for which they invented the name Nursery School. The Committee gave full weight to all the objections—moral, physical, and mental—urged against school attendance of children under five. Having set out the practice of other countries and given the views of Local Education Authorities, the Committee proceeded to deal with the financial aspects of the question, and the place of the Nursery School in the educational system, and in conclusion they formulated their recommendations.

After stating that, in their opinion, the proper place for a child between the ages of three and five was at home with its mother, provided that the home conditions were satisfactory, they expressed the view that under existing economic conditions the home surroundings of large numbers of

children attending Elementary Schools were not satisfactory, and that children from these homes should be sent during the daytime to places specially intended for their training. They considered that the best place for this purpose was a Nursery School, and that, on the grounds of educational advantages, economy, and convenience of administration, so far as a provision by a public authority was concerned, such Nursery Schools should, as a rule, be attached to public Elementary Schools. "The ideal institution for younger infants will, as a rule, form an integral part of the Public Elementary School system." Private institutions, if under public inspection, were, however, desirable in certain circumstances and under certain conditions. With regard to the conduct of such schools, children under five years of age who were admitted should not be subjected to any mental pressure or undue physical discipline. Formal lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic and everything that required prolonged complex operations of the nervous or muscular system should be rigidly excluded from the curriculum. Freedom of movement, constant change of occupation, frequent visits to the playground, and opportunities for sleep were essential. The school itself should be roomy and well-lighted, warmed, and ventilated.

The Committee put the number in a class as high as thirty, but expressed the view that the care of these younger infants presented difficulties at least equal to those which arose in the teaching of older children, and that the teachers of them should be selected with scrupulous care. They believed that the best teacher would be one who had made a careful study of the physical and mental development of childhood, and who had a sympathetic and motherly instinct and a bright and vigorous personality. They stressed the necessity for dealing with very young children on special lines, and even suggested that His Majesty's Inspectors be asked to bring to the notice of the Board any cases where the mental development of young children was being retarded by faulty methods. As to future teachers, they suggested that some knowledge of the special methods and curricula suitable for young children and of the physical conditions of young children in health and disease should be required from all candidates at the Board's Certificate Examination.

It is important to bear in mind, when considering these recommendations, that one-third of the total number of children of the age-groups between three and five were already on the registers of public Elementary Schools, and that this recommendation of Nursery School

provision was, in reality, a plea for a differentiation in the educational treatment of younger infants from that provided for older infants. We would now extend the plea to include children of five and six.

Very little public action was taken in the next few years to carry out these recommendations. In 1916, however, Sir George Newman, the Chief Medical Officer of the Board, began to put forth an eloquent plea for the children who had been excluded from school. He pointed out that the provision for the physical and mental well-being of children under five years of age, and particularly of children from twelve months to five years, was neither sufficient in amount nor satisfactory in character. Apart from the Notification of Births Act and its administrative machinery, and the efforts made by Infant and Child Welfare Centres, there were three types of institution that might be available for the healthy little child, namely: (1) the Infants' Department of the public Elementary School; (2) the Day Nursery; and (3) the Nursery School.

Sir George pointed out that whereas in 1907, when the Consultative Committee was at work on the question, it was true that the number of children between the ages of three and five on the registers of Elementary Schools was about

one-third of the total estimated number of children of that age, by 1916 the number had fallen by about a half. Exclusion of these children in many areas had become general, and he estimated that the number in actual attendance was then only about an eighth of the total. This constituted a new problem.

After noting the great improvement that had taken place in the management of Infants' Schools and in the attention paid to the physical care of children, he pointed to the fact that the Infants' Department conformed generally to the routine of the school as a whole in regard to supervision and control, to the hours of opening and closing, to the absence of a midday meal, and to the nature of the sanitary as well as the educational accommodation. Such conformity was by no means always an advantage to the little child. This led him to support the recommendations of the Consultative Committee, but he suggested that the age period should now be put at from two or three to five or six years—a period that might be extended in special circumstances.

“Eventually,” he writes, “it might be thought desirable that all little children should be educated on the lines now suggested for Nursery Schools, but that time is not yet come, and further experiment and experience would be



needed before any general conclusion could be arrived at." He added that there was much to be said for grappling with the proper training of the little child by applying both methods, namely, the reform of the Infants' School . . . and the establishment of *ad hoc* Nursery Schools associated more or less closely with existing Infants' Schools. It was essential to preserve as far as practicable the continuity of the education of children through the various stages of their development. That was more than ten years ago.

What should have been a step towards the greater provision of Nursery Schools was taken by the Education Act of 1918. By Section 18 of that Act it was provided that :

1. The powers of Local Education Authorities for the purposes of Part III of the Education Act, 1912, shall include the power to make arrangements for—

(a) Supplying or aiding the supply of Nursery Schools (which expression shall include Nursery Classes) for children over two and under five years of age or such later age as may be approved by the Board of Education, whose attendance at such school is necessary or desirable for their healthy physical and mental development ; and

(b) Attending to the health, nourishment,

and physical welfare of children attending Nursery Schools.

2. Notwithstanding the provisions of any Act of Parliament, the Board of Education may, out of moneys provided by Parliament, pay grants in aid of Nursery Schools, provided that such grants shall not be paid in respect of any such school unless it is open to inspection by the Local Education Authority and unless that Authority are enabled to appoint representatives on the body of managers to the extent of at least one-third of the total number of managers, and before recognising any Nursery School the Board shall consult the Local Education Authority.

These provisions of the Act of 1918 are now embodied in the Act of 1921.

Although the expression "Nursery School" is stated to include the Nursery Class, it is obvious that an institution separate from the Elementary School is here contemplated. This marks a significant divergence from the recommendation of the Consultative Committee of 1907 that, on the ground of educational advantage, economy, and convenience the Nursery School should normally be attached to an Elementary School, and, indeed, form an integral part of it. The fact is that, in the intervening ten years, at least one interesting experiment had taken place,

which had profoundly modified former ideas about the education of young children.

This experiment is associated with the names of the Misses McMillan. It began in 1908 with the founding of the first London School Clinic, in the upper room of a County Council Elementary School at Bow. Though the Misses McMillan were educationists, they did not propose to train the minds of the children until they had healed their bodies. The clinic was removed from Bow to Deptford in 1910. Here these ladies received children under five years of age as well as those over that age. Miss Margaret McMillan shows that, though the clinic cured thousands, a great deal of time and money was wasted in alleviating diseases which are preventable and should be stamped out. She states that in the last three months of 1913 the Deptford nurse treated 950 cases of skin diseases, and that in the same period 927 of these returned, having been re-infected, to have the same kind of disease treated by drugs and lotions.

It was felt strongly that all children and not only the children of the well-to-do need sunlight and freedom for development. They should be educated in healthy surroundings. In order to secure this the McMillan School opened a small but independent Nursery School at Evelyn House, Deptford, in 1911. In 1913 the London County

Council granted the use of a vacant site intended for an Elementary School for the experiment to be continued. In 1914 the new Nursery School was opened. In 1917 the premises were extended, and were declared open by the then Minister of Education, the Rt. Hon. H. A. L. Fisher, who, it will be remembered, was responsible for the Act of 1918.<sup>1</sup> No doubt the success of this experiment had an important influence on the terms in which that Act was framed.

The Act having been passed, it was necessary for the Board of Education to frame appropriate regulations for the conduct and administration of Nursery Schools. Accordingly, in March 1919 a code of grant regulations was issued, the prefatory memorandum of which dealt at some length with the aims, administrative arrangements, and other details relating to the schools. We shall have occasion later to refer again to this document. Here we have only to note that the memorandum assumed "for purposes of convenient description" that the Nursery School or Class would be a separate institution. It was assumed at the same time that proposals might

<sup>1</sup> In 1921 the building was still further extended, and this time was formally opened by Queen Mary. The number accommodated sometimes reaches over 290. The school is run on open-air lines; and is now recognised as a Training Centre for certificated teachers.

be submitted for the recognition of schools or classes which would be part of other organisations, such as Day Nurseries or the Infants' Departments of Elementary Schools. With regard to the latter, it was stated very definitely that any proposal for a combination of this type "would need careful consideration, and it should generally form the subject of early consultation with the Board." The issue of this document therefore marks a further step in the unfortunate divorce between the Nursery School and the Elementary School system.

This process was carried one step further when, in August 1925, the Nursery School Regulations as such were abandoned, and the "Special Conditions applicable to Nursery Schools under Section 21 of the Education Act, 1921," appeared as Chapter VIII of the revised Regulations for Special Services. Here the reference throughout is to the Nursery School as a separate institution, and the Nursery Class, which was so definitely associated with it in the Act of 1918, is nowhere mentioned. Thus in practice Nursery Schools are administered under the Regulations for Special Schools, while Nursery Classes attached to Infants' Schools come under the Elementary Code. There seems to be no reason why this distinction should be maintained; indeed, it is difficult to understand why it ever arose, since

clearly it was not contemplated by the original Act. It appears to result from the fact that the tendency has been to emphasise the physical and health side of the work undertaken, and thus to regard the Nursery School as a proper object for control by the Medical Branch of the Board of Education. But the educational side of the work is no less important, and the partial separation of the Nursery School from the main and normal stream of educational provision is to be regretted, and may have done something to hinder its development. In any event, an anomaly has been created which it should be the business of administrators to remove.

A solution would be provided if the nursery and infant stages of education, in whatever institution conducted, were regarded as a single and indivisible whole. Appropriate general regulations should be framed for the conduct of education up to seven plus. These should be based fundamentally on the former Regulations for Nursery Schools, and should include those portions of the Elementary Code which are suited to the education of very young children. Any apparent opposition of interest between the Infants' School and the Nursery School would then disappear, and the break at five years of age might be avoided. With the setting of new standards, the amenities of the Infants' School

might be improved, and, with the encouragement that would be given to it to take pupils below the age of compulsory attendance, a real guarantee of its continued existence as a well-defined part of the system would be provided.

The Act of 1918 contained a provision that, under some circumstances, a Local Education Authority might adopt a by-law under which parents would not be required to cause their children to attend school or to receive efficient elementary instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic before the age of six. It was laid down that, in considering whether approval should be given to a by-law of this kind, the Board of Education should have regard to the adequacy of the provision of Nursery Schools in the area to which the by-law related. Obviously it was expected that, in some areas at least, a very extensive development of Nursery Schools would take place. Unfortunately this expectation has been falsified by the event. In the ten years that have succeeded very little has been done to establish Nursery Schools and Classes on anything like the scale required to provide for the growing social need.

In his Report on the Health of the School Child (1926) Sir George Newman says: "The physical condition of the child entering school is the primary problem of the School Medical Service.

Each year as it passes adds to our knowledge and experience of the physical and mental qualities, and indeed of the general character of the school child, deepens the conviction of the importance of the earliest years of life, and particularly of the pre-school years. . . . The School Medical Service is called upon to grapple with children one-quarter to one-third of whom need medical attention immediately on admission to school." Yet in the year 1926 there were but 26 Nursery Schools, 11 established by Local Education Authorities and 15 by Voluntary Committees, with a total accommodation for 1,367 children. When it is recalled that the number of children between the ages of three and five on the registers of Elementary Schools for that year was 181,492, a few of them in properly organised Nursery Classes, and that the total number of children of that age was 1,413,217, it will be readily seen how vast is the problem and how inadequate the present arrangements.



## CHAPTER II

### THE PRE-SCHOOL CHILD

#### I

#### DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM

It is desirable at this point to indicate somewhat more precisely the dimensions of the problem. The following table gives the numbers of boys and girls in each age-group of children under five in 1926<sup>1</sup>:

Age.	Boys.	Girls.	Total.
0-1 . . . . .	337,130	328,000	665,130
1-2 . . . . .	333,488	325,244	658,732
2-3 . . . . .	336,874	329,649	666,523
3-4 . . . . .	344,714	336,893	681,607
4-5 . . . . .	370,390	361,220	731,610
Totals . . . . .	1,722,596	1,881,006	3,403,602

Children are not anywhere enrolled on the registers of Elementary Schools below the age of three, but, as has already been pointed out, there are some areas where children between the ages of three and five are so enrolled. If, therefore, the number between the ages of three and five already attending school, together with the numbers attending Day Nurseries and Nursery

<sup>1</sup> Statistics of the Board of Education, 1927.

## 36 THE CASE FOR NURSERY SCHOOLS

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Schools, be deducted from the total given above, the result will give approximately the dimensions of the problem in its widest aspect. The numbers are :

On registers of the Elementary School (3-4)	. . .	32,770
On registers of the Elementary School (4-5)	. . .	148,722
In Nursery Schools	. . . . .	1,507
In Day Nurseries	. . . . .	3,364
		<hr/>
		186,363
		<hr/>

The difference between the totals of these two tables indicates that about three million children are outside the purview of any institution for education and nurture, and it is probable that very many of them come under no medical supervision whatever. If attention be restricted to those between the ages of two and five, the number is almost two million. These constitute a sufficiently serious problem.

## II

### WHAT IS BEING DONE

At this stage of the inquiry it will be convenient to review what is being done, or might be done, under the existing Statutes for children of the various age-groups below five in different parts of the country.

**(A) BY THE PUBLIC HEALTH AUTHORITY****I**

Section 1 of the Maternity and Child Welfare Act of 1918 empowers the Council of any County (other than London) or of any Borough, Urban District, or Rural Council, to make such arrangements as may be sanctioned by the Minister of Health for attending to the health of expectant and nursing mothers, and of children under the age of five years who are not being educated in schools recognised by the Board of Education. These powers may be used so as to develop a system of Home Nursing, but not a general domiciliary service by medical practitioners. At the present time, schemes of maternity and child welfare in various stages of development are in operation practically throughout the country, and authorities definitely engage in them.

Under the Notification of Births Act, 1907 (made compulsory in 1915), it is the duty of the father, or other person in attendance upon the mother at the time of confinement, to notify at once the birth of a child to the Medical Officer of Health, while the Authority is required to arrange for suitable advice to be given by a duly qualified person to the mother in the house. Home visiting by the Health Visitor is the foundation of every well-organised scheme

of maternity and child welfare. An early visit is paid to every household in which a birth has occurred. On this and subsequent visits the mother is instructed in infant care, and where there is an Infant Welfare Centre she is recommended to bring her child to it. The Health Visitor also attends the Centre, hears the advice given by the doctor to the mother, and is then in a position to follow up the doctor's directions.

The number of acting Health Visitors in 1926 was 3,878, made up as follows :

(a) Number employed by Local Authorities on Maternity and Child Welfare work . . . . .	919
(b) Number combining Maternity with School Nurse's or Sanitary Inspector's or other duties . . . . .	1,262
(c) Number employed by Nursing Associations and utilised by County Councils . . . . .	1,351
(d) Number employed by Health Societies and other voluntary agencies . . . . .	346
	<hr/>
	3,878
	<hr/>

It should be noted, however, that these are not all whole-time workers. It has been suggested that they are equivalent to 1,800 whole-time workers.

In 1918 a Circular was issued by the Ministry of Health suggesting that a standard of one Visitor to about 400 births should be set. If the table of age-groups of children be consulted,

it will be seen that this standard is reached, taking the country as a whole, but it is known that there is a deficiency in some districts.

## II

In 1926 there were 2,195 Centres for Infant Welfare—773 of them voluntary and the rest conducted by Local Authorities. As a rule no medical treatment is provided at these Centres, the usual course being to refer cases to local hospitals or to private practitioners. Special arrangements for dental treatment are made at about 500 of them. "Light" treatment is also provided at some of them to combat the effects of rickets, malnutrition, and similar ailments. The Local Authority, through the agency of the Maternity and Child Welfare service, is also responsible for the treatment of non-tuberculous children under the age of five suffering from crippling diseases and defects. Altogether about forty Authorities administer schemes for this purpose, while voluntary agencies in 1925-6 received grants amounting to £54,847 for similar work.

## III

In addition to Homes for mothers and babies, there are thirty-five Homes (847 beds) for healthy children under five, recognised by the Depart-

ment. These figures include residential Nurseries which admit children for temporary residence during domestic emergencies, and also Homes for the care of children for whom no other arrangements can be made in their early years. There are also the Day Nurseries provided by voluntary agencies and assisted by the Ministry of Health. Those Nurseries, as well as the Homes, admit children up to five, and in recent years considerable efforts have been made to improve the qualifications of Nursery nurses by means of training. In some few instances the Nursery is run as far as possible on open-air Nursery School lines. In 1925-6 the total grant received by voluntary agencies in respect of Day Nurseries was £21,793.

## (B) BY THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY

### I. INFANTS' SCHOOLS

The attendance at school of children under five is not compulsory, though an Education Authority may admit children as young as the age of three if their parents wish them to attend and if there is accommodation. The number of children between the ages of three and five on the registers of the public Elementary Schools on March 31, 1926, was 181,492, which represents about one-eighth of the total estimated population of that age. The policy in London, Leeds, and

elsewhere is to admit these children wherever accommodation is available, but no general provision exists for them; indeed, the policy of the Board of Education at one time was to withhold grant amounting to 1s. per head in respect of every child under five attending school. This pressed hard on the industrial and congested areas, where the margin of accommodation was small. We note that quite recently a reorganisation of schools has been attempted in certain distressed areas, which, for motives of economy, has involved very little building. The effect has been that the available accommodation in the area has been reduced, and consequently children under five have, for the first time, been excluded from school. It seems to be very regrettable that that course should have been followed in areas where poverty is severe, and where malnutrition and other physical disabilities are affecting, not merely the young, but the whole population. According to the most recent return issued by the Board, referring to 1926-7, no less than 46 Authorities have no children under five in their schools, while a further 44 have less than 20. Those, however, who are admitted become subject to medical inspection, and may take part in school feeding.

Where children under five do attend, exceptional provision is very rarely made to supply

their special needs. Perhaps this is particularly true in country districts where infants of all ages are commonly taken in a single room, and where indeed the one-room school is not unknown. In towns, where the numbers are held to justify it, the Baby-room is common, and though it does not meet all the requirements of the children that we have indicated, still it may be a very bright, pleasant, and cheerful place. In the Baby-room little cots and hammocks for sleeping may be the rule rather than the exception, while each baby may have his plate and cup and napkin, and all the requisites for a simple mid-morning meal. The strictures passed by the women inspectors twenty years ago on the Baby Class of the period would to-day have little validity, though instances of repression and formal discipline might still be discovered if they were sought. In general, the freer methods now common in the Infants' School have extended to the Baby Class. Nevertheless, the Baby Class does not give all that is required—a sufficiency of fresh air and sunlight, freedom of movement, contact with nature and living things as distinct from those inadequate substitutes, coloured friezes and artificial toys. Nor is a suitable midday meal made available for those who need it.

More than one Local Authority has realised these limitations, and has done something to



remove them. The example of Manchester, to which we shall presently refer, is outstanding in this connection. Here children are admitted at three years old to Nursery Classes, which may have access to a garden, and which are provided with additional staff. In Leeds, where 6,000, or two-fifths of the total number of children between the ages of three and five, are on the school rolls, it is claimed that many are trained under Nursery School conditions. It is not clear, however, that staffs have been augmented to cope with the new conditions, although in Manchester, at least, additional provision has been made.

## II. NURSERY SCHOOLS

During recent years a few detached Nursery Schools as distinct from attached Nursery Classes have been established. At present they number only twenty-seven—twelve controlled by eight Local Authorities and fifteen controlled by Voluntary Committees—and they have a total accommodation for 1,507 children.

Such are the powers at present possessed by Local Authorities, and such are the arrangements—inadequate to the last degree—at present in being to cope with the problem of the pre-school child.

The weakness of the present arrangements lies very largely in the permissive character of the law,

## 44 THE CASE FOR NURSERY SCHOOLS

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and also, where the law is carried out, in the lack of uniformity in the provision made. While Local Authorities are compelled to provide at least the minimum conditions of health and education for children from five upwards, they are under no similar obligation in regard to the pre-school child. The mother receives one or more visits from the Health Visitor, the baby may be dealt with at the Infant Welfare Centre, but the little child between the age of twelve months and five years is too often altogether neglected. Happily, enlightened Authorities are grappling with the problem by a co-ordination of all the means available to them, whether administered by a Health Committee or by an Education Committee. Where an Authority has both Health and Educational powers, and where the Medical Officer of Health and the School Medical Officer are one and the same person, co-ordination is not difficult, and we are informed that this is the usual practice; but where a Local Authority has Health powers but not Educational duties, or vice-versa, the difficulties are often very great.

Putting it generally, the two great difficulties Authorities have to face are these: (a) the child is under the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee from birth to perhaps five years of age, and then from five to fourteen it comes more directly under the Education Authority.

Thus there is no continuous supervision by the same authority, though the child lives a continuous life and carries on its maladies from one stage to the next; and (b) the child coming to the Education Committee is all too often physically defective owing to the fact that there is no systematic provision for medical treatment before it arrives at school age. Hence the Education Committee has had to receive what one school doctor calls "damaged goods" and pay out of the education rate for their repair.<sup>1</sup>

### III

#### THE NEED FOR GREATER PROVISION FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

The fundamental problem with which we are confronted is what should be done for those of the two million children between the ages of two and five who are in need of care. Assuming that there are six hundred thousand children in each age-group, and taking the Chief Medical Officer's statement that from one-quarter to one-third of each age-group are in need of medical attention, the aggregate number between the ages of two and five for whom provision is urgently needed is well over half a million.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Health of the School Child*, 1926.

What can, and what should, be done for those half-million children ?

We have shown that Local Authorities could make some provision to deal with the problem through existing legislation relating to medical services. But since the legislation is permissive and not obligatory, it is only in the most enlightened and progressive areas that the powers given are fully used, with the result that in some areas the health of children under five is gravely neglected.

It is of little use in connection with this problem, which is really the problem of the eradication of disease, to attempt to deal with it satisfactorily after it has had a five years' run. To point to the ameliorative work of the clinics is not a sufficient answer, because the chief business of the clinics is to cure or alleviate, while what is required is to prevent and to eradicate. And if prevention is to be undertaken, it must begin at the beginning and not be postponed until it is too late. It is not, therefore, merely more clinics that are needed, but the establishment of institutions such as properly equipped and properly conducted Nursery Schools, where preventive work can be carried out under conditions that every Nursery School worker knows by experience to be thoroughly effective. Fresh air and sunshine have been proved over and over

again to be the natural forces that of themselves work wonders for the health of the growing child.

The Nursery School is not only valuable from the point of view of maintaining children's health ; it is valuable for the education it affords. Nurture is essential for young children, but so is the right kind of training. Here Day Nurseries fail to meet the full need. They cater for children much younger than two—sometimes only a few months old—and, except in special instances, they rarely keep them beyond five. Their main work is care, though occasionally some training is undertaken. The Day Nursery is essentially a convenient centre where working mothers may, for a small fee, deposit their children in safety till they return to claim them. It must be said with emphasis that, just as no multiplication of Clinics can meet the full needs of children below five, so an increase in the number of Day Nurseries, which are primarily concerned with the care of babies, cannot meet the situation.

In Nursery Classes attached to the Infants' Schools the element of training may be present in a higher degree ; qualified teachers, often with a supplementary staff of student nurses, may be employed ; morning feeding may be undertaken regularly ; hot water may be available ; and in some instances there may be access to a

garden. In general, the Nursery Class is desirable if it approaches very closely to the conditions and the activities usual in a good Nursery School. A few Nursery Classes succeed in doing this, but others, with the best will in the world, are handicapped by an environment which makes both nurture and training exceedingly difficult. The character of the school building too often provides an impediment which cannot be overcome. For example, in Manchester the newer schools are built on the open-air principle and have a garden, but where Nursery Classes are started in older buildings in congested areas these advantages are absent, and the teachers feel the lack of them. The coming of the Nursery Class to such schools has emphasised the inadequacy of the provision made in past years for infants in general. This is particularly true of buildings, and both in Manchester and Bradford new Infants' Schools are designed to make possible a more complete fulfilment of the Nursery School ideal, and to provide amenities which will be enjoyed by children over and not only under the age of five. It is significant, in matters of lesser moment, that the supply of beds to Nursery Classes in Manchester has led to a clamour for them in the Infants' School proper. The supposed antagonism between the Nursery Class and the Nursery School to which reference

is so frequently made at conferences and in educational journals is largely fictitious. The two institutions deal with the same class of children as nearly as possible in the same way. The teachers are animated by the same ideals, and would like their service to be assisted by the same advantages. The alleged differences in cost are largely imaginary, and, when they exist, are due to factors to which we shall presently refer. The fact that they happen to be administered under different regulations is an inexplicable accident which it should be easy to remedy. The Board of Education was probably right in discouraging baby-classes of the old type. Both the Board and the Local Education Authority should provide for the admission of children at an early age and ensure that conditions within the school are propitious to their growth. All the evidence tends to show that the most favourable conditions are those associated with the open-air school. We see, therefore, in the Nursery School the ultimate aim towards which the Nursery Class and the Infants' School itself are striving effectively.

It used to be the custom to take a child and ask the question, "What will he become?" To impress on the minds of others how great were the possibilities of the child, pictorial representations were furnished showing the various

stages both of an upward and downward progress. The implied moral was that, in the main, personal care or neglect might lead to one or other result. It is unnecessary to discuss whether this picture conveyed the whole truth. Life is complicated, and the currents and cross-currents are so strong and so confusing that it is difficult to portray in so simple a manner all the factors that control development.

But one truth at least is vividly suggested by this picture. It is the importance of the child, and the value to the community and to itself of its proper care and training. This view of the child's importance has secured progressive support during the last quarter of a century from all alike who interest themselves in education or in social reform. The traditional saying of the Jesuits, "Give me the child till seven, and I care not who has him after," is now generally understood to imply a profound truth. The whole future of the young child and of the nation may largely depend on the first seven years. This rediscovery of the child and his supreme value to the State characterise the thought and outlook of the educators of the present age, and may provide a solution for some of our gravest problems.

Our view is that education is largely the provision of an environment which will enable a



child to develop its innate powers. The kind of environment that should be provided for what is termed the pre-school child is dealt with in greater detail in another chapter. It is sufficient here to say that it must produce a social atmosphere which will promote in children a quiet confidence, a sense of freedom, and a love of nature. This is the distinguishing characteristic of a good Nursery School, and should be found in all schools attended by children of this age.

According to the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education, there are two principal grounds for the institution of Nursery Schools. First, they provide a method of sound nurture and education for little children aged from two to five years; secondly, they provide a system of preparatory medical supervision for the child before admission to the public Elementary School. In view of his statement that *a quarter to one-third of the children admitted to the Elementary School at the age of five need medical treatment*, these two considerations are of an importance which can hardly be exaggerated.

Sir George Newman is able to point out what is done at the Deptford (McMillan) School, where a large number of children are admitted at two-and-a-half or three or four years of age in a wasted, diseased, and forlorn condition, and

by five years of age are made strong and set on the highway to health. Where the school is run on open-air lines the incidence of infectious disease is markedly below the normal figure. It is a part of the Nursery School plan that the doctor should visit the school at frequent and regular intervals, and that the children should be able to remain at school all day and enjoy regular meals and proper arrangements for bathing and sleep. A good Nursery School, where the child is placed in happy, healthy surroundings and brought under skilled supervision and training, also acts as a valuable object-lesson to the mother, and raises the standard of treatment in the home. Where such a Nursery School has been established for several years it has created a new spirit of hope and enthusiasm in the parents, and almost every Nursery School has a long waiting list of babies.



JIM (AGE 2 YEARS).



JIM (AGE 3½ YEARS).



THE NURSERY "DINNER."

THE LILYCROFT NURSERY SCHOOL, BRADFORD.

# CHAPTER III

## THE NURSERY SCHOOL

### I

#### THE AIM AND FUNCTION OF THE NURSERY SCHOOL

It is not without significance that in the Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers published in 1927 by the Board of Education Nursery Schools for the first time find a place. Most of the material now included was formerly to be found in the prefatory memorandum attached to the Regulations for Nursery Schools, 1919; its transference to the Handbook of Suggestions gives the Nursery School its right place in the general provision of elementary education, and therefore is to be welcomed. The Nursery stage is at last recognised definitely as the first in the educational process, which cannot be neglected or omitted without jeopardy to those stages that succeed it. The Board are careful to explain that "no rigid lines of demarcation exist between the various stages," and that if the difference between the Nursery and Infant stages appears to be relatively rigid, it is because of the artificial line produced by the fixing of the age for school

attendance at five years. When introducing the discussion of the Infant stage the Board state that "where most, or all, of the children have been previously in attendance at school from the age of three or four, there should be no break either in the methods or in the general character of the training," and thus go far to obliterate the line that the law has drawn. "School life," says the Handbook, "should help to remedy the defects often inherent in the conditions of home life," and it goes on to suggest that in all that the Nursery School undertakes the teacher will have in view both the physical well-being of the children and the general training of which they are capable.

Above all, the teacher will see to it that the fullest advantage is taken of life in the open air, whether in playground, garden, or neighbouring park, and that all those activities for which open-air life affords scope, such as the cultivation of little gardens, the care of birds and animals, the observation of beautiful things in nature, or merely romping and playing, are given their due share of attention.

After pointing out the necessity of rest, of cleanliness and good manners, especially at meal-times, the Handbook refers to the mistaken notion that healthy physical development should be the

sole aim at the nursery stage. The school, we are told, should provide specific training that will foster the growth of the mind and prepare children to begin the work of later schooling with well-formed habits, with alert and eager minds, and unspoiled by premature attempts to learn what is unsuitable.

It would indeed be a mistake to assume that healthy physical development can be the sole concern of a Nursery School, and that the growth of the mind may be left to take care of itself. The school should provide specific training on this as well as on the physical side. Although formal work in reading, writing, and arithmetic should have no place in the Nursery School, the children should be taught to use their voices naturally, without harshness, and to articulate clearly and correctly; they should be encouraged to ask questions, to understand and act upon what is said to them, to talk freely on their own little concerns, to say simple rhymes and poems, and to sing together.

The aim of a Nursery School is also clearly set forth in the London School Medical Report for 1927, and reproduced in Sir George Newman's latest Report (1929):

“The main aim of the Nursery School is to cultivate good habits—to secure cleanliness of person, good manners at table, clearness and

comeliness of speech, kindness and consideration for others. It further tries to foster a love of wholesome food and healthy exercise, and to induce an alert and receptive attitude of mind towards the world of people and things. It is more of a home than a school—a preparation for school rather than a school itself. And any instruction in reading and counting that goes on is regarded as quite subsidiary to the main aim of the school, and is in some schools omitted altogether. The programme of the Nursery School consists of a succession of happy pursuits. The distinction between work and play disappears. The children work when they think they are playing, and play when they think they are working. All the while they are growing strong and healthy in body, sane and happy in mind.”

The fact that the nursery stage is discussed in this way in publications with which the Board is so closely identified is of considerable significance. This is so not merely because of the implied value for later school years of the health of the child, and of its orderly and progressive mental development ; but because of the recognition of the importance attached nowadays to the earliest years of childhood in the moulding of life and character. These years constitute the foundation on which the structure of later life is reared ; indeed, they influence profoundly the very quality of that structure.

The aim and function of the Nursery School are summed up in its title, for the Nursery School is both Nursery and School at one and the same time.

The "nursery" element characteristic of the Nursery School owes its existence to certain facts, some of which are far-reaching in their consequences on the national life. Among these are: overcrowding (particularly in towns), the greater absorption of married women into industry, the lack of knowledge (not confined to any one class) of many parents about the best upbringing of their children, and the existence of grave physical defect as revealed by the medical inspection of school children.

It has already been pointed out in connection with the Government Inquiries into the alleged Physical Deterioration of the People that the state of national health was, in 1905, giving cause for serious alarm. The attempts made since that date to cope with the trouble by a careful ascertainment of facts, and the subsequent institution of the School Medical Service, showed that, though some of the deductions made might be exaggerated or even wrong deductions, there was sufficient evidence of a state of things that called for drastic treatment at the earliest possible moment.

In 1907, when the School Medical Service



began to operate, the widespread existence of physical defects was disclosed; twenty years later, as we have already noticed in Sir George Newman's latest report, such physical defects still existed, and gravely injured the health of one-third of the children who entered the Elementary Schools at the age of five. What the defects were need not detain us here; suffice it to say that most of them were preventable, a fact to which the experience of the few Nursery Schools already existing in this country abundantly testifies. This state of things alone would justify support for a development which, among other things, has for its object not only the cure, but also the prevention, of such defects.

Overcrowding, which condemns small children to the fœtid atmosphere of close rooms, or relegates them to the street as their playground, has revealed the pressing need for Nursery Schools. The absence from home of an increasing number of mothers, brought about by the need they have felt for making greater financial provision for their families by joining the ranks of industry, has, in many areas, powerfully reinforced the same point: for it is wellnigh impossible, in conditions of overcrowding and of domestic financial stringency, to provide the environment which growing children require.

The specialised knowledge which parenthood

requires is possessed by comparatively few mothers; too many parents display an ignorance, in matters of clothing and feeding and in moral and social habits, which is clear evidence of the need of a proper training, not merely for themselves, but still more for the children committed to their care.<sup>1</sup>

But in the Nursery School we look for those things which are due to the childhood of the race: space, sunshine, and fresh air; cleanliness; regular and proper feeding; sleep; exercise and play; intelligent and pleasurable occupation. It is a place where brightness and cheerfulness are freely dispensed, where cleanliness and tidiness are the rule, where good habits, moral and social, develop naturally, where regularity in sleep and play and medical care are assured, where interest is stimulated, enjoyment experienced, inquiry encouraged, language developed. It is a refuge where a child may find rest, care, and training, and at the same time it provides a welcome relief to the tired and harassed mother.

The aim of the Nursery School, however, is much more than this. It is not only a "nursery," it is a "school," though there is a danger in using the word "school," which has come to be associated, in the minds of some people, too closely with definite courses of instruction, and

<sup>1</sup> See *Fundamentals of School Health* (Kerr).

too little with the idea of harmonious development. Yet it is in the best sense of the word a school, and the education given in it is what true education ought to be, an attempt to provide such an environment that the children may develop their innate powers. A well-planned life for the little ones, even the toddlers, is the definite purpose of the Nursery School; every detail is carefully thought out in the light of the knowledge relating to child-life that has been accumulated, especially during the last few years. As Miss Margaret McMillan has well said: "The most brilliant results of existing Nursery School work are not physical, good as are the physical results. Is its most startling effect that every rickety child is cured within a year? No. The finest results of the open-air schools are mental, not physical. They are found in the rapid progress of alert and awakened children who learn in a few weeks what, under other conditions, they might spend years in trying to acquire. All this is undeniable. It is proved beyond dispute."

Until comparatively recent times, the study of the pre-school years of childhood was a neglected field. It is now acknowledged (as the greatest educationists have always contended) that these years are perhaps more important than any others, whether considered from the physiological or psychological standpoint, for in these years is

laid the foundation of the whole system of education. Between the time of birth and seven years of age the child develops more quickly than at any other stage. Indeed, the importance of the first year, even of the first few days, is now coming to be regarded as of prime significance. For example, if the cries of a newly-born child are always followed by instant satisfaction, the baby discovers a sort of magic by which his wants can be supplied. As a consequence, such a child may become the despotic ruler of a household, for the more his cries are attended to unnecessarily, the oftener he cries, and there is no peace. That child is the most happy who is not allowed to develop in this direction and become the centre of the household, but who learns that sometimes he must wait while others are served. In this early period, too, may also be observed the effects, not dissimilar in their later consequences, of the apparently simple operations of feeding and evacuation. These things belong to the child's very early days, and, when a child enters the Nursery School at two years of age, its character and conduct have already been greatly biased. Children appear to be self-centred, but in the process of education, such as is provided in a properly organised Nursery School, they are encouraged to co-operate willingly with others.

Dr. Crichton Miller speaks of the "urge towards completeness" which every child possesses. The Nursery School tries to set free that urge, in order that each child may arrive at the goal of its own maturity. Suggestion and repetition are important factors in this process. The part played by the sense of wonder, the desire to know, and the effort to "be good," which often characterise these years, is of paramount importance, for these things lie at the very roots of character, and their right direction and development have a determining effect upon later life. On the other hand, any failure to appreciate these things and their value in early training may do much to retard or even to stunt or to pervert the mental and moral development of after-years. The function of a Nursery School, besides providing for the ordinary care of the body, is to create such an environment that a child may develop the best of which he is capable, in an atmosphere of joy and freedom. We must recognise at the same time that daily routine, though essential, need not be a dead formality, and that an absence of formal instruction does not imply neglect of true education.

Miss Grace Owen, in her pamphlet *Education in Nursery Schools*, sets out the definite objects of the Nursery School in the following terms :

1. To provide healthy external conditions for the children—light, sunshine, space, and fresh air.

2. To ensure a healthy, happy, regular life for the children as well as continuous medical supervision.

3. To assist each child to form for himself wholesome personal habits.

4. To give opportunity for the exercise of the imagination and the development of many interests as well as skill of various kinds.

5. To give experience of community life on a small scale where children of similar, as well as varying, ages work and play with one another day by day.

6. To achieve a real unity with the life of the home.

How far it is possible to carry out these aims depends on such external conditions as the provision of suitable premises in those areas where Nursery Schools are most required, on the attitude of the home, the demands of public opinion, and so forth. But that these aims can be accomplished, often with astonishing success, is proved by the actual experience of the twenty-seven Nursery Schools already in existence. There can be no doubt as to what these schools succeed in doing in the direction of providing space, sunshine, sleep, and good food; of fostering cleanliness and tidiness, of inculcating good social habits, such as learning to be companionable, good-tempered, persevering, and truthful; of

developing powers of correct speech. Added to all this is the relief provided for harassed and hard-working mothers, the advantage provided for the child without brothers or sisters, and the benefit of access to some place other than the street in which to play.

## II

### WHAT THE NURSERY SCHOOL INCLUDES

#### I. GARDENS AND SHELTERS

Many of the existing Nursery Schools are carried on in adapted—sometimes ill-adapted—buildings, such as old residential houses, often surrounded by quite suitable and extensive gardens and lawns, or in small halls connected with some institution established for quite other purposes. The buildings in which these schools are conducted are the least satisfactory for realising the full aim of a nursery department, though it is surprising what excellent results are obtained even under these unfavourable conditions. Others, such as the Lilycroft School at Bradford, have been specially designed and built to meet the needs of the Nursery School.

In planning the lay-out of a Nursery School it is necessary to keep in mind certain important objects. There must, in the first place, be provided the greatest possible amount of space in

order that children may indulge in free movement and open-air activity; in the next place, there must be provided ample opportunity for promoting cleanliness, and adequate arrangements for dressing, for feeding, and for sleep. The building should be such as would engage the interest of the children, and the whole premises should have characteristics that suggest a home rather than a school.

The ideal Nursery School may be described as a garden surrounded by shelters, each shelter being assigned a definite purpose. The garden—the larger the better, for space and air are so necessary—is of the utmost importance. The shelters should be simple in construction, and not buildings of formidable frightfulness. Those shelters, in which the actual work of the school is carried on, should face south, and on that side should have sliding doors or windows, which, when the weather is suitable, can be thrown back so that the school may be under “open-air” conditions. Facing these there should be a verandah, covered with glass or other material as a roof and paved with concrete, which might be used for free movement on days when the garden or the lawn was not available for this purpose. The other shelters should be devoted to the purposes of the kitchen or the washhouse. All the shelters should be fire- and weather-proof,



although ample arrangements should be made for free passage of air through them, and they should be warmed when necessary. Each children's shelter should have a bathroom and lavatory extension. The bathroom, in addition to having a tiled bath capable of accommodating three or four children at a time, should also contain wash-basins and a spray for the older children. A towel-peg and tooth-brush should be provided for each child; in fact, the bathroom should be one of the best furnished of the rooms, for it will be in daily use. The kitchen, and the wash-house for laundry work, are also necessary accompaniments of a well-equipped school. The floors of all Nursery Schools should be cleaned every day. Such arrangements as are outlined here are in actual being at the Lilycroft School (Bradford) and the McMillan School (Deptford), but all the existing Nursery Schools, however housed, approximate as far as may be to the same plan.

Nursery Schools carried on in adapted premises have usually a garden and a lawn. These, without much alteration, provide some of the conditions of Nursery School life. In those schools, however, which, like the Lilycroft School, have been specially planned, there is ample garden and grass space provided where the children may exercise themselves freely. The garden is generally laid out with little winding paths, terraces,

and steps. As far as possible, a profusion of flowers of all kinds is cultivated, largely for the variety of colour which they supply. The McMillan School makes great use of a herb garden as a medium for sense-training, and provision is also made for the keeping of pets. Almost all the schools have either their cats, rabbits, or goats, and pigeons and other birds, all of which are given decent quarters and affectionate care. Each garden contains well-planned apparatus, such as balancing boards, rib-stalls, ladders, inclined planes, see-saws, swings, and so forth, all designed to promote independence and self-reliance. Altogether the garden is an educational institution. It provides an essential part of the child's training.

## 2. FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT

The furniture of the various shelters should serve the purposes for which the shelter is devised. This is obvious where the kitchen and the wash-house are concerned, but it is especially important with regard to the main shelters, where the training of the children is carried on. Here it is necessary that the furniture, tables, and chairs should suit the needs of very small children. In the first place, they must be of the right size. If a child must fall from a chair, it is better that

he should not have far to fall. Similarly, if a child is to be trained in habits of tidiness, the cupboards must be of such a size that he can reach the shelves without difficulty.

One of the most important items of Nursery School furniture is the bed. The commonest kind in use is what is known as the stretcher-bed, which is made of stout canvas buttoned on to a simple wooden frame that has collapsible legs. The advantage of this kind of bed is that it can be easily carried, and packed away when not in use in cupboards specially provided for receiving it, and can be cleaned and washed. These cupboards also hold the blankets, and, sometimes, the little chairs and tables, which in an open-air school it is advisable to pack away while children are at play or when they go home for the night. There are other types of beds—some are made of iron—but for general convenience those described above are found to be best. Elaborate furnishing, however, is not desirable. The best things in a Nursery School should not be in the shelter but outside in the garden.

The children's shelters should be brightly coloured and adorned with plants and flowers. What friezes and pictures there are should be carefully chosen. The floor should be covered with linoleum.

Such in brief outline is an account of the

necessary equipment; there is no pretence of luxury, but a belief that what is simple and convenient may be made attractive.

### 3. DIET

In some Nursery Schools as many as three meals a day are given—breakfast, dinner, and tea—and such an arrangement is strongly recommended as the best in order to secure one of the main ends for which Nursery Schools are established. This, however, does not obtain in all schools; indeed, some schools provide no meals at all, although they distribute ample quantities of cod-liver oil, chemical food, and milk. Breakfast, where it is provided, generally consists of porridge on some days and bread with butter or dripping on others. Tea, too, is a light meal, consisting of cocoa or milk together with bread-and-butter, jam, or perhaps cake. Milk is used freely in all schools, as is indicated by the amounts spent upon it. The main meal of the day is dinner. The following are menus actually used in typical schools:

#### McMILLAN SCHOOL

##### *Winter.*

##### *Summer.*

Monday	Meat and potatoes. Currant pudding. (Toddlers) Milk pudding.	Scrambled eggs, potatoes, and peas. Jam pudding.
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# 70 THE CASE FOR NURSERY SCHOOLS

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	<i>Winter.</i>	<i>Summer.</i>
Tuesday .	Vegetable stew. Treacle pudding (suet).	Meat, potatoes, and vegetables. Rice pudding and raw fruit.
Wednesday	Fish pie. Jam roly.	Fish pie. Custard and fruit.
Thursday	Meat and potatoes. Rice pudding, oranges.	Vegetable stew. Treacle pudding.
Friday .	Soup and dumplings. Batter pudding.	Meat and potatoes. Cornflour shape.

## GOLDSMITHS' COLLEGE

	<i>First Week.</i>	<i>Second Week.</i>
Monday .	Mince, potatoes, greens. Sponge-cake, custard.	Brown stew, potatoes, dumplings. Bread-and-butter pud- ding.
Tuesday .	Potato pie. Rice pudding.	Shepherd's pie and onions. Tapioca and prunes.
Wednesday	Stew, potatoes, cabbage. Figs and custard.	Mince, potatoes, greens. Apricots and custard.
Thursday	Bread, potatoes, meat balls. Bread-and-raisin pudding.	White stew, turnips, potatoes. Rice pudding, stewed apples.
Friday .	Fish pie, potatoes. Bread-pudding.	Fish and potato pie. Ground rice and jam.

## THE GEORGE DENT SCHOOL

Monday .	Vegetable soup and potatoes. Steamed ginger pudding. Milk pudding. Fruit juice.
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Tuesday	Irish stew. Suet pudding and treacle. Milk pudding. Fruit.
Wednesday	Soup and potatoes. Steamed lemon pudding. Milk pudding. Fruit.
Thursday	Fish pie and potatoes. Jam or marmalade pudding. Milk pudding. Fruit.
Friday	Tomato savoury. Suet pudding and treacle. Milk pudding. Fruit.

(Hard crusts to be eaten before each meal.)

At the McMillan School it was found, in 1923, that the cost of meals was half a crown per child per week—a cost borne by some of the parents, but by no means all of them, the school being in a slum area. At the Goldsmiths' College Nursery School a charge of sixpence a day is made for the dinners. The parents of this school are not too poor to afford the charge made for both milk and dinner. In some schools it is not uncommon for the better-off parents to pay for the meals of the poorer. In suitable weather the meals are served out-of-doors.

#### 4. CURRICULUM

The curricula of existing Nursery Schools in their essentials disclose little variation. Play, both individual and co-operative, is a common feature of them all ; the co-operative play mainly consists of singing games and rhythmic exercises carefully selected to bring into motion all the muscles of the body. With very little children the curriculum includes learning to walk and to talk, and the cultivation of habits and table manners. As the children grow older, ample provision is made for sense-training—in colour, in sound, in form. In all the schools the day begins with an examination of the child from a hygienic point of view. Then follows, where the conveniences for doing so exist, the bath and also the care of the teeth. The Nursery School at the Friars, Bristol, begins the day with “ nose drill ”—an amusing but serious ceremony through which an effort is made to teach each child the proper and effective use of the pocket-handkerchief. The remainder of the morning at this school, as at most of the others, is devoted to work on Froebel or Montessori lines. This lasts till dinner arrives, after which comes the daily rest. The occupations of the afternoon are less strenuous, though none the less real. Then comes

tea, where tea is given, followed by preparation for returning home.

These essentials of both the social and educational kind are differently arranged in different schools. How they are planned at the Goldsmiths' College School and the George Dent School the following time-tables show. The time-tables for all the other schools are similar, except that some of them begin a little earlier and finish a little later, a variation depending almost entirely on the necessities of the district in which the school is situated.

#### PROGRAMME OF THE DAY (GOLDSMITHS')

- 8.45-9.0.—Arrival of the children.
- 9.0-9.45.—Hygiene, tooth-cleaning, use of handkerchief.  
Visit of Nurse. Care of schoolroom, flowers, animals. Play in shed and playground.
- 9.45-10.10.—Collective work or group work. Music games.  
Special training. Rhythmic work.
- 10.10-10.30.—Hygiene, preparation for lunch.
- 10.30-10.50.—Lunch.
- 10.50-11.10.—Clearing away of tables and chairs. Four of the children who have offered to be helpers assist with washing of plates and mugs. The rest of the children use this period for free play.
- 11.10-11.40.—Whenever possible this period is spent out-of-doors. Nature study. Conversation. Games and singing or occupations.
- 11.40-12.0.—Preparation for dinner. Attention to washing.  
Hygiene, putting on feeders, services, dinner.
- 12.0.—Dinner.



1.45-2.0.—Prepare for rest.

2.0-3.15.—Rest period.

3.15-4.0.—Folding blankets, putting away beds, putting on boots and shoes. After this the time is spent as the general mood of the children seems to suggest, on stories, rhymes, picture-books, or games.

4.0-4.15.—Departure of children.

*Notes.*—Some of the children are not fetched until 4.30 p.m., but they always occupy themselves quite happily until the mother arrives.

All activities are quite free, and no child is compelled to join in any type of collective work.

Daily records are kept concerning hygiene, appetite, and sleep. Also written individual records, which yield fuller information concerning social adaptation, etc., are kept.

#### PROGRAMME OF THE DAY (THE GEORGE DENT SCHOOL)

9.0-9.30.—Arrival. Overalls put on. Hair tidied. Handkerchief drill. Hygiene.

9.30-10.0.—Prayers. Morning talk. Singing. Registration.

10.0-10.15.—Lunch and clearing away.

10.15-11.45.—Montessori apparatus. Varied occupations. Music. Drawing. Colour work. Nature walks and talks. Stories.

11.45-12.0.—Hygiene, washing, and preparation for dinner.

12.0-12.30.—Dinner.

12.30-12.45.—Hygiene and preparation for sleep.

12.45-2.0.—Rest period.

2.0-3.35.—Singing, games, free play.

3.35-3.45.—Preparation for home.

3.45.—Car children leave.

4.0.—Non-car children leave.

## 5. STAFF

The staffing of the Nursery School must be adequate. It is recognised that the efficiency of the school depends almost entirely on the staffing arrangements. The provision of staff prevailing in existing Nursery Schools, the needs of future schools, and the training and qualifications of Nursery School teachers, are dealt with in Chapters IV and VI. It is sufficient at this point to say that the proper staffing of the Nursery School is the bed-rock on which depends the success of the new structure.

## 6. INSPECTION

Inspection of the existing Nursery Schools is carried out (*a*) by the Doctor, (*b*) by the officials of the Board of Education as a condition of grant, and (*c*) by the Local Authorities' Inspectors in the same way as in the ordinary schools.

Medical inspection takes place at settled intervals, usually once a term, although in some schools it is much more frequent. Inspection by the nurse takes place daily. Careful records are kept, and as a rule the children are weighed

monthly. The following extracts from typical reports by visiting doctors indicate the great advantage the children derive from fresh air and regular feeding, and the importance attached to enlisting the co-operation of the parents in the work of the school.

“General health has been very good. Nurse reports six bad cases of impetigo, the children in every case returning with it after the holidays. The fact that there have been only 202 dressings compared with 701 last year shows that Nurse’s patient efforts are bearing fruit and the mothers are responding to her requests and helping in the homes.” (Selly Oak.)

“There is no doubt that the work of the Nursery School is very satisfactory, especially from the point of view of the Medical Officer. An improvement is noticed in the children after they have been in attendance only a week or two. It is becoming to be recognised more and more that small children need as much open air as possible. . . . We had a few cases of mumps in the summer time, but the school was not closed and the infection did not spread.” . . . (Salford.)

“It is gratifying to note that in the February-March influenza epidemic only four children were affected by the disease, a proportion which compares favourably with the incidence in the other schools in Manchester.” (Collyhurst.)

“Our little charges are beginning to look like country children.” (Jellicoe Nursery School.)

The Medical Officer submitted the following report for the year 1926 upon the Rachel Mc-Millan Nursery School<sup>1</sup>:

“I have had extended opportunities of observing the health of the children, and I am pleased to report a marked improvement in their physical and mental state. The pale, flabby, debilitated, often rickety child, so painfully noticeable on admission, has been replaced, after a period of attendance in the school, by a sturdy, happy, contented child; the dull and apathetic child is no longer seen, and a bright, responsive child has taken his place. The children, judiciously dieted, are placed in most hygienic surroundings, their hours of sleep and education being carefully regulated; exercises in the form of play and exposure to the maximum amount of sunshine and fresh air are aimed at.

Among the results following this treatment, I must especially mention the remarkable reduction in the prevalence of catarrhal conditions of the respiratory tract and their injurious sequelæ, proving without doubt, that during the child's attendance in the school he has not only acquired increased resistance to disease, but very marked recuperative powers. In this connection it is interesting to read the remarks of the Chief Medical Officer to the Board of Education (Sir George Newman) in his Annual Report for the year 1925:

<sup>1</sup> See *Handbook of London Education Service*, 1927.

'At the Deptford McMillan Nursery School an analysis of approximately 50 cases shows the beneficial effect of school life under open-air conditions on the London slum child. Breathing exercises, massage, and sunlight treatment are given in necessary cases, and the nasal catarrh prevalent among many of the children on admission clears up rapidly under good hygienic surroundings.'

The following figures show the comparative freedom from infectious disease in the school, further proof of the resistance conferred on the children by the healthy conditions under which they live. During the year 1926, out of a total number of 252—

The number of cases of scarlet fever was 6 or 2·38 per cent.

"	"	"	diphtheria	"	4	"	1·58	"
"	"	"	measles	"	2	"	0·79	"
"	"	"	chicken-pox	"	15	"	5·95	"
"	"	"	mumps	"	12	"	4·79	"

There have been no cases of scabies and only one case of ringworm ; cases of impetigo, a fairly common skin affection among schoolchildren, were few, and cleared up promptly under appropriate treatment. These excellent results would not have been obtained without the co-operation of the Principal, Miss Stevinson, and the staff of the Nursery School, whose promptitude in reporting and the diligence in detecting suspicious symptoms have been most fruitful in preventing the spread of infectious disease.

Numerous defects have received treatment, including squint, enlarged tonsils and adenoids, carious teeth, middle-ear disease, rickets, malnutrition, skin affections, etc.

The average attendance at the school during the year 1926 has been :

Council section	104	out of total	112,	or	92·6	per cent.
Voluntary	126	"	140	"	90	"
	<u>        </u>		<u>        </u>		<u>        </u>	
Total	230	"	252	"	91	"

For the last three months of 1926 (October-December) the attendance has been :

Council section	99	out of total	112,	or	89	per cent.
Voluntary	129	"	140	"	92	"
	<u>        </u>		<u>        </u>		<u>        </u>	
Total	228	"	252	"	90	"

I am of the opinion that the Nursery School is conducted on sound health principles, that it forms the foundation of permanent good health, and that it fulfils with conspicuous success the purposes for which it was established."

The inspection by the officials of the Board of Education includes a review of the hygienic as well as the educational work of the school. With them it is a question of general efficiency as a condition of grant. When it is remembered that the Board's own grants to Nursery Schools amount

to £2,000 per annum, and that the Local Authorities' grants amount to nearly £3,000 per annum, there is a strong case for insisting that the administration of the schools be efficient. The following report on the George Dent School indicates quite fairly the attitude of the Board towards the schools :

“The Board of Education learn from the report that the school is being conducted on satisfactory lines and with initiative by a keen staff. In addition to fulfilling its purpose as a model training school for the benefit of the students at the Darlington Training College, the school now appears to be filling an equally important rôle for the needs of a number of children from the poorest homes in the town, and the popularity of the school is evidenced by the waiting list of thirty names.

Dr. Wilson also reports that arrangements for the medical supervision of the children and the treatment of minor ailments are working effectively and are generally satisfactory.” (George Dent School.)

### III

#### CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIONS AND CRITICISMS

The objections to Nursery Schools, as was pointed out by the Consultative Committee's



*From "The Practical Infant Teacher," by courtesy of Messrs. Pitman.*

THE RIBSTALL.

THE McMILLAN NURSERY SCHOOL, DEPTFORD.



Report (1908) on the School Attendance of Children below the Age of Five, fall under three heads—Moral, Physical, Mental.

The moral objections relate to the effect of early school attendance: (*a*) on children's character; (*b*) on parental responsibility. Regarding the first, it is sometimes urged that from the point of view of character and conduct, young children are better at home, as they may learn bad habits through contact with worse-mannered children at school. The real question at issue, as the Committee pointed out, was not whether all the influences at school are invariably for good in the case of all children, but whether in the case of children for whom no suitable provision can be made at home the net advantages of school attendance do not outweigh the net advantages of any alternative open to them. Even if there might be a small number of undesirable children in the school, the others would hardly avoid them altogether by staying away and playing in the streets. If they are likely to meet them at all, it is better for them to do so in a place, such as the Nursery School, where influence for evil will have fewer chances of exerting itself, and where all share in influences which make for positive good.

It is urged that to allow children to attend school at the tender age of two or three years

is to weaken the parents' responsibility, to their own detriment and that of the children. The experience of the established Nursery Schools does not support this contention. It is found that the children in attendance are cleaner and better clothed as a direct result of the influence of the school, and that the sense of responsibility is increased rather than diminished. In connection with some of the existing Nursery Schools, Mothers' Clubs have been started, where mothers are instructed in the care and proper feeding of their children. Experience shows that the work of these Clubs, the repeated interviews at school between the parents and the teachers, and the visiting of the homes by nurses and others, help to create a standard of parental care which shows itself in the improved condition of the children both at home and at school. Instead of weakening the sense of parental responsibility, the attendance at school of the younger children is more often a means of bringing home to mothers a livelier sense of their parental duties.

The physical objections, according to the Report, fall under the heads of Ventilation and Liability to Infection where children are assembled in large numbers. The latter consideration led to the limitation of the size of the Nursery School which appeared in the original legislation of 1919, but which, in the light of

further experience, and in view of the proved immunity of the open-air Nursery School from extensive epidemics, has been abandoned by the Board of Education.

It used to be urged, with regard to schools of the older type, that ventilation was very difficult under the conditions that then existed, and that, while all schools were more dangerous to health than even an indifferently arranged home, the danger was much greater for children under five owing to their increased need for light and air.

This view was based on the results of previous experiments made in Scotland, and in certain English areas, by which the purity of the air in public Elementary Schools and in the homes of the parents of the children attending those schools was examined. The experiments showed that the air in the schools as tested for carbonic acid gas was exceedingly impure; the results of further experiments showed that the air in various factories and workshops by day, and even in one-roomed dwellings by night, in the same areas, was considerably purer. When, however, a full investigation was made into this state of things, it was found in almost every case to be due either to the fact that the mechanical ventilating apparatus was imperfect or to the fact that all windows were on one side of the room.

These facts were disturbing at the time, but

the argument as to danger to health loses practically all its force in view of the fact that the type of Nursery School which this Report recommends is the open-air shelter, where the children spend a large portion of their school-time out-of-doors, and, on fine days, take their meals in the open air. There is, however, a certain amount of indoor life, but in summer the sliding doors of the shelters are rolled back, while all the year round a current of air is kept moving through the rooms. The difficulty of ventilation, then, is not an insurmountable one, even in the older type of building which may be used for Nursery Classes, while in the properly constructed Nursery School this difficulty may be said not to arise at all.

The question of infection is one that has presented greater difficulty, although nowadays the experience of existing Nursery Schools is fairly clear on that point. Twenty years ago medical men differed on the matter, but, judging by the reports of the Medical Officers of the Nursery Schools, there is now much greater agreement. In another part of this Report extracts are given from actual reports of these officers which seem to show (a) that the incidence of infectious disease is less among Nursery School children than among children outside; (b) that where the disease occurs, it responds more quickly to treatment; (c) that the infection does not spread to

the same extent as it does among children not in Nursery Schools. These striking results are attributed to fresh air and sunshine, so essential to the health of children under five, and to co-operation between the home and the school. It should also be observed how important a part in producing these results is played by the frequent bath that takes place in all well-organised Nursery Schools, by the inculcation of habits of cleanliness, and by the cleansing and disinfection of clothing.

What we have called the mental objection took its rise at the time when children below the age of five were admitted to the Infants' Department of Elementary Schools. The children were submitted, more or less, to what is known as formal instruction. There is little doubt that many of them were the victims of undue mental strain, owing partly to the lack of proper training of their teachers for that specialised work, partly to the demands of the upper school, and partly to the demands of inspectors. During recent years, however, great changes have been made in these respects. Teachers in training who are likely to spend their time with younger children are becoming more and more familiar with the methods of Froebel or Montessori. And, although the complaint is still heard in the upper school that children come from the Infants' Depart-

ment "knowing nothing," it is becoming recognised more and more that, though they may have a smaller store of acquired facts, they are superior in mental power. The demands both of the upper school and of inspectors have become less insistent, and the temptation to strain the capacities of small children is gradually ceasing to exist.

It used also to be urged that it was useless for any children below the age of five to attend school of any kind because of their incapacity to profit by instruction. In the Introductory Memorandum to the Report to the Board by five Women Inspectors (1905), it was stated that "it will be seen that the children between the ages of three and five get practically no intellectual advantage from school instruction." This was seized upon in many quarters as a good reason for excluding children from school at that age. But a careful study of that Report will convince any unbiased reader that, in arriving at this conclusion, the five Women Inspectors had in mind the formal instruction and the kind of rigid discipline then insisted on. This was no criticism of the desirability or otherwise of little children attending school, but was an indictment of the kind of training prevalent at the time. It was not uncommon to find children intellectually dull; but the dullness was due in many

instances to the fact that the children had their originality and natural instincts drilled out of them.

There is general agreement that, given the right environment, with properly qualified teachers and a carefully planned course of training, children benefit enormously in every way by attendance at school in those early years. These benefits are what the Nursery School aims at providing; but everything depends on the presence of the proper conditions. Miss McMillan claims that children who have stayed at the Nursery School till seven are quite three years ahead of other children in linguistic and other attainments; and, while it would not be safe to argue generally from Miss McMillan's own children, it is not unreasonable to suppose that, even at the age of five, at which children are normally transferred to the Infants' School, they are infinitely better for the all-round training they have already received.

Moreover, account must be taken of the great advance in knowledge of the psychology of children that has been made during the last quarter of a century. The importance of this study is becoming more and more realised by teachers and others. When, then, it is urged as an objection to Nursery Schools that their pupils are liable to suffer mental strain, or that the

capacities of small children are unequal to the demands of formal instruction, the answer is that the properly conducted Nursery School permits neither mental strain nor over-pressure. Outdoor schools can never be the same as indoor schools. The Nursery School aims at training in moral and social habits in an atmosphere of freedom and sunshine. Since the whole environment is new, it is recognised that the methods must be new.

The objections outlined here, though they were stated and met in the Report of the Consultative Committee issued twenty years ago, are, in the main, the objections still brought against the Nursery School. But the experience of the modern Nursery Schools shows that there is little in them, and that the balance of advantage is heavily on their side.



## CHAPTER IV

### EXAMPLES OF NURSERY SCHOOLS

#### I

#### IN ENGLAND AND U.S.A.

NURSERY Schools were first recognised by the Board under the Act of 1918. According to latest returns there are now twenty-seven: twelve established by Local Education Authorities, and fifteen by voluntary committees. They have accommodation for 1,507 children and are distributed as follows: London—Deptford (three), Hampstead, Kensington, Lambeth, Poplar, St. Pancras (three); Provinces—Birmingham (three), Bradford (four), Bristol, Darlington, Derby, Leeds, Manchester (three), Salford, Scarborough, and Sheffield.

Nursery Schools have existed in the London area for a considerable number of years, the oldest (Notting Hill) having been opened about 1908, and the Rachel McMillan School three or four years later. In the beginning of 1917 a Report by the School Medical Officer was presented to the General Purposes Sub-Committee of the London County Council pointing out the advantages in poorer neighbourhoods of school attendance

for the control of infectious disease, the particular benefit of Nursery Schools under the care of an experienced matron, and the desirability of having such schools under the Education Authority in order that advantage might be taken of existing clinics and other institutions.<sup>1</sup> During the same year a conference, including education officers, head mistresses, and medical officers was appointed by the Education Officer to report upon the education of children under five. Their Report, presented to the Education (General Purposes) Sub-Committee in September 1917, dealt with various matters relating to Nursery Schools.

In June 1917 six voluntary (technically known as non-provided) Nursery Schools were recognised by the London County Council, and within the next few months two more schools were included.

In July 1919 it was decided that where application was made by Managers, arrangements should be made by the London County Council for the medical inspection and treatment of children attending these non-provided schools. In December 1919 a report from the Medical Officer advocated nurses' daily visits to the schools. In February 1922 it was resolved to continue this daily inspection.

The Council, in March 1920, decided to maintain, as an experiment, three Nursery Schools

<sup>1</sup> See *Handbook of London Education Service*, 1927.

and one Nursery Class in existing public Elementary School buildings and three Nursery Schools in detached buildings. Numerous buildings and sites were inspected by the Council's officers, but in consequence of the issue of Circulars 1185 and 1190 by the Board of Education, it was decided not to proceed with any of the six proposed Nursery Schools except the Council's portion of the Rachel McMillan Nursery School. The position of the eight voluntary schools remained unaltered, and also that of the Nursery Class at Christchurch School, Hampstead, already established, but this was closed in 1926.

In November 1923 the Medical Officer reported on the effect of Nursery Schools on the health of the children. The condition of children leaving the Hampstead and Somers Town Nursery Schools to enter Infants' Departments was found to be superior to that of the ordinary school entrant. At the Rachel McMillan School the weight of the six-year-old children was appreciably greater than that of the six-year-olds who had been at Creek Road Elementary School in the same neighbourhood for three years.

A proposal was made in 1924 for the establishment of six and ultimately of twelve Nursery Classes in Infants' Departments in poor neighbourhoods. In October of the same year the Central Care Sub-Committee of the Council

considered the matter, but did not see its way to taking any action at the time owing to the policy of rationing expenditure.

The Nursery Schools now established are Goldsmiths' College, the Jellicoe, the Union Jack, Notting Hill, McMillan, Somers Town, Romany Road, Mary Ward, and the Children's House. During the year 1928, the Council decided to proceed with the erection of two "detached" Nursery Schools, each to accommodate 150 pupils, in poor districts, at a total cost of £17,000. Excluding debt charges, the annual cost per head is estimated to be £14 1s. 6d. The details of organisation have not yet been decided, but some concern was aroused by the preliminary proposal that the only qualified members of the staff should be a head teacher and a second teacher. In addition, there were to be four "nursery assistants" who would not be required or expected to possess teaching qualifications, and would not be recognised as teachers, and two junior assistants aged 15 to 16. This proposal did not conform to the standard of staffing which is suggested below as an indispensable minimum, and two or three qualified teachers should be employed in substitution for the unqualified "nursery assistants" if the educational aim of the Nursery School is to be realised and full efficiency maintained.

In Bradford there are three Nursery Schools (St. Ann's, Princeville, and Lilycroft) and one Nursery Class (Wapping Road). The St. Ann's Nursery School, which is not entirely open-air and is in a crowded district, was provided by the Managers of the St. Ann's R.C. School, and the Bradford Education Committee pays an annual rent for the premises. The Wapping Road Nursery Class meets in one of the classrooms of the Wapping Road Infants' School. Both Princeville and Lilycroft Schools are accommodated in modern open-air buildings of the best type, and were pioneer Nursery Schools under the Education Act of 1918. In October 1927 the Bradford Authority explored the possibility of a further extension of Nursery School accommodation; eventually they adopted the following recommendations of their Director:

(a) The provision of Nursery School accommodation as a part of a public elementary building in new schools and in possible adaptations to be made in two existing Elementary Schools.

(b) The erection of two new schools as provided in the programme of the type already established at Lilycroft, Princeville, and St. Ann's.

This correlative development of the provision on two sides has much to commend it, and illustrates the way in which the example of the separate Nursery School will cause, in the future,

the Infants' School itself to undertake wider functions necessitating more suitable buildings and ampler equipment.

The George Dent School was started in a small house in Darlington in 1917 by the Women's United Services Club. The following year the school was removed to Fairfield—a mansion with a beautiful garden—particularly adapted for the purpose. It faces south, has large rooms with big windows, and a verandah opening on to the garden. It is a considerable distance from the homes of the children, but close to the Darlington Training College. In 1919 an arrangement was made with the Corporation of Darlington to convey by tram twenty-five children from the poorer parts of the town to and from school each day, assistants from the Nursery School and students from the Training College accompanying them. Nowadays (1929) about sixty children travel to and fro daily in a trolley 'bus. The majority of the children come from very poor homes.

In Derby the Wright Street School is in a slum area. It is an old Ragged School, adapted by French windows and cloak-room additions to the purposes of a Nursery School. The cost of adapting the school was £3,000. It is a school that has to fight against tremendous odds, but has done remarkable work. It has admitted as many as one hundred children at one time.

The Leeds School does valuable work, but by its very success points to the need for more schools of the kind in the city.<sup>1</sup>

The Ardwick, Mather, and Collyhurst Schools in Manchester are excellent institutions of their kind. The Ardwick School is carried on in workmen's cottages run together. It is simply equipped, and has the characteristic that it is a normal part of the neighbourhood. The Mather School was part of the City Training College, and was used as a Demonstration School, although its premises were not entirely suitable for a Nursery School. The Collyhurst School, carried on in the premises of a settlement in a slum area, is a school for delicate children. Two other schools are either completed or in process of completion.

The Encombe Place School at Salford was in a crowded area, and did excellent work. It is one of the oldest of the Nursery Schools, and combined real efficiency and proper staffing with economy of expenditure: the average cost per child was £12. This school is now transferred from its somewhat inconvenient buildings to a new open-air semi-permanent building arranged on three sides of a square.

There is a Nursery Class in Scarborough.

<sup>1</sup> For fuller information about Leeds, see Dr. Graham's instructive pamphlet, "The Care and Training of the Child under Compulsory School Age."

It accommodates forty children from the poorer part of the town. Formerly there was in the town a properly recognised Nursery School, but it was in a rather better neighbourhood. This school was discontinued as a school maintained by the Local Authority on account of economy.

In Birmingham the Nursery Schools Association of that city established a Nursery School as early as 1907. It was succeeded in 1919 by the Summer Lane School, held in the same premises—the Women's Settlement. It is in a slum district, and, two years ago, had a waiting list of one hundred and fifty. The school has undergone various enlargements, and now accommodates ninety-two children. In September 1924 a Nursery Class was established in an Infants' School, and accommodates thirty-two children. The Birmingham Authority makes an annual grant to the Selly Oak School, where there is accommodation for fifty children. In all the Birmingham Nursery Schools use is made of the school clinics to obtain medical and dental treatment, and the schools are visited regularly by the members of the staff of the School Medical Service as well as by one of the District Inspectors of Elementary Schools.

Sheffield has now a finely equipped Nursery School, which consists of a one-storey building erected on open-air lines. There is a large



pavilion, which can be divided into two by movable partitions and a separate classroom, so that three open-air classrooms, each holding about thirty-five children, are obtained. The classrooms can be closed if necessary by folding doors, and open on to a verandah. There is good playground space, part being grass and part asphalt. Other accommodation includes kitchen, larders, staff sitting-room, lavatories, and cloak-room (with pipes screened by wire for drying clothes).

The foregoing schools are those which receive assistance from the Board of Education and from Local Authorities, but there are others, run on similar and equally successful lines, which are supported entirely by private subscriptions. Good examples of such schools are those at Sutton, maintained by Mr. Thomas Wall; at the Welwyn Garden City, supported by the parents of the children attending the school; and the Friars School, supported by the Society of Friends at Bristol. This last-named school meets in an interesting old building that was once a monastery. In 1925 the school was begun to meet the needs of a very poor area; it started with twelve children, but now has thirty.

The United States of America, like Britain, have of late years given much attention to the subject of Nursery Schools.

It is worth noting that the Nursery School

movement in the United States has developed for the most part along two definite lines: (1) the establishment of Nurseries, primarily for the purpose of affording research centres; (2) the establishment of Nursery Schools having the education of the children as the dominant interest. Nursery Schools of the first type originated in the United States with the City and Country School. In 1919 the Bureau of Educational Experiments, New York, opened the school above referred to. The main purpose in establishing this school was to secure information about children below the age of five upon which future organisation could be built. In 1922 the Bureau published a volume (Bulletin No. 11) entitled *A Nursery School Experiment*. The account of the work carried on is a well-illustrated one of nearly one hundred pages, and enters with very great detail into every aspect of the school's work. It gives a picture, so far as it has been worked out, of an environment designed for babies—an environment designed to provide them with rich sense and motor experiences, to give them scope for learning through experimentation, to give them adventure without danger to life and limb, to give them contacts with others without demanding inappropriate adjustments: in short, an environment planned with educational needs in mind. Of course, the physical needs receive

careful attention. This picture describes in rather glowing terms what are precisely the aims of the English Nursery Schools. In 1920 Arnold Gesell established the Yale Psychophysical Clinic for two-year-olds, and this was followed by the establishment of the Iowa Welfare Research Station in 1921. Since then research centres have been opened at various Nurseries, notably the Merrill-Palmer Nursery School and the Institute of Child Welfare Research. This is not the place to discuss the Child Guidance clinics which may be associated with some of the above institutions, but which study the problems of behaviour in older children. An account of them, and of what is being done on the same lines, is given in a paper read by Dr. R. H. Crowley to the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Glasgow in 1928. Attention is also directed to a pamphlet on Child Guidance in the U.S.A. written by Dr. Letitia Fairfield and Miss Morton. Nursery Schools of the second type were first established in 1921, when the Merrill-Palmer School was organised in Detroit. One year later, the Teachers' College organised a Nursery School at the Manhattanville Day Nursery, to be followed shortly by the establishment of the Walden School Nursery in New York City, and the Cambridge and Ruggles School Nurseries in Boston, as well as

others in widely separated parts of the United States.

The November issue (1927) of *School and Home*, the organ of the Parents' and Teachers' Association of the Social Culture School, was a special Nursery School number, and contained a condensed account of a piece of valuable research work relating to such institutions as the Merrill-Palmer Nursery School, Detroit, the Child Welfare Bureau of the Teachers' College, New York, the Child Research Station of Iowa's State University, and of other experiments, including those of the City and Country, the Horace Mann, and the Free Day Nurseries in New York, the Schools of Boston (Ruggles Day Nursery and Cambridge Nursery School), the Franklin Public Nursery School in Chicago, and so forth. The various writers dealt with such subjects as "What is a Nursery School?", "The History of the Pre-School Movement in the United States," and "An Outstanding Reason for Nursery Schools." Then followed an interesting description of the Nursery Schools already established in the United States, which recalls the aims and function of the English Nursery Schools. As in this country, the movement in America is only in its beginning.

It is difficult to obtain definite statistics as to the number of Nursery Schools in America at the

present time, but a survey made by the United States Bureau of Education in the spring of 1927 reported about seventy. Only one was under the Public School system, though five were housed in Public School buildings. The majority were subsidised by private organisations. The ages of the children attending the Nursery Schools reported on in this survey ranged from one to five and a half years. It is said that, having once made a study of the Nursery School, its origin, its theory, its purpose, and development, no American can fail to believe that it has come to stay. The marked success and popularity of the Nursery Schools organised to date have been so great that it is believed that the number of schools will increase rapidly; though in the United States they may be even more needed than in England, owing to the later age of admission to the primary school.

## II

### DIFFERENT TYPES OF ORGANISATION

#### I. STAFFING

In the existing Nursery Schools the staffing varies considerably, and, as might be expected in institutions many of which are run by voluntary agencies, it is governed by financial conditions.

The Selly Oak School, with 50 children from two to five on the roll and an average attendance of 44, has for its staff a specially trained superintendent, an assistant, a junior assistant, a part-time nurse, and occasionally a voluntary helper. The George Dent School, with a roll of 80 children, has a trained superintendent, and an assistant for its purely educational work. Goldsmiths' College School, with a roll of 30 and an average attendance for 1927-8 of 19, has a trained certificated teacher and an untrained helper. The Lilycroft School, whose roll is 60, has a superintendent, a trained assistant, a probationer, and a housekeeper. In the McMillan School, where the roll has reached as many as 260, and where some of the shelters accommodate 50 while others accommodate 35, the arrangements vary slightly. A head and an assistant are found necessary for a "fifty" group, whereas a head and a student teacher can manage the other groups. Each group of 50 or 35 is itself really a small school. Within the group further grouping is necessary. In actual practice it has been found that eight two-year-olds, ten three-year-olds, and twelve four-year-olds are, on the whole, a satisfactory unit. This has also been found to be the case elsewhere, and indicates that each head at the McMillan School must have three to five helpers.

## 2. BUILDINGS

Nursery Schools are a comparatively recent development in education. The pioneers who founded them believed that they knew what were the essentials of Nursery Schools, and endeavoured to secure these for young children. Light, fresh air, and space were the main characteristics of the environment they desired for little children. Efforts were made to provide these in areas where the necessity was greatest. But these essentials were seldom secured at one and the same time.

The pioneers, anxious to grapple as soon as possible with the increasing evil of preventible ill-health, would not wait for the support of public opinion, nor for the supply of adequate funds, but took whatever offered in the way of accommodation.

But, whatever the reasons, the majority of the early Nursery Schools were, and in many cases still are, carried on in buildings which are by no means ideal for their purpose: the Gipsy Hill School began in a mission-hall, the Birmingham School in a Women's Settlement, the Friars School, Bristol, in the remains of a monastery, the Derby School in old Ragged School premises, and the Jellicoe School in a disused garage; others began in ordinary domestic dwellings, like the

Ardwick School, which is carried on in a row of workmen's cottages, or the Children's House, Bow, which provides for its pupils open-air treatment on a flat roof. Two or three were carried on in disused mansions, as, for example, the George Dent and Sutton Schools, where, with their ample gardens and lawns and added shelters, the Nursery School " essentials " are much more available ; while others, as at Goldsmiths', are more directly associated with a Training College. In some instances the premises have been recon-ditioned and made as suitable as possible for the type of work desired. The McMillan School began in very humble circumstances, but, by the acquisition of surrounding property, has developed shelters and gardens, and gradually created the conditions of a well-equipped Nursery School.

The large variety of buildings, and the lack of any sort of uniformity in them, make it difficult to compare conditions and results. But it may be said with emphasis that, taking into account the disadvantages under which most of the exist-ing Nursery Schools labour, so far as premises are concerned, the work done is remarkably successful. We have a profound admiration for these pioneer schools and for those who started them.

We have already referred to the fact that the Nursery School must provide not only nurture but education. What this includes is stated in



Chapter III. To enable such an education to be carried out with effect, it was soon seen that the old conditions could not be the basis of a forward movement, and that, where possible, premises must be entirely remodelled and adapted to the double function of the Nursery School; or that new premises must be erected, and fitted for the specific purposes of the Nursery School. This is what was done at Bradford at the Lilycroft School, and at Salford and Sheffield. It is also about to be done with the two proposed schools in London. Thus, it is hoped, will emerge a model type of Nursery School building which will form a standard, though not an unchanging standard, to which subsequent experimenters will look when planning their new schools. What the type might be can be seen in the plan of a Bradford School which forms the frontispiece.

### 3. NUMBERS OF PUPILS AND COST OF MAINTENANCE

The numbers accommodated in the existing Nursery Schools are as varied as the types of buildings; indeed, the type and size of the school govern the numbers. The Bradford schools (St. Ann's, Princeville, and Lilycroft) accommodate roughly 80 each, whereas Ardwick (Manchester) and the Union Jack School provide for

30 each. Collyhurst (Manchester) and Hunslet (Leeds) accommodate 40, while Salford and Darlington provide for 60 and 80 respectively. The McMillan School can take as many as 260. It will be seen that, except for the McMillan School, the unit is small, and that here, again, there is little uniformity. The reasons that have led both to the general smallness of the number of pupils, and to the exceptional variation from this rule, are of interest. Many of the schools have been established by voluntary agencies, and here the financial factor has tended to keep them small. Their size has been limited, not only by the cost of maintenance, but by the accommodation of the premises which it was possible to secure for a relatively small initial outlay. Most of the institutions were purely experimental in the beginning, and this was another argument for limiting their size. Further, it was assumed originally, not only by those who undertook experiments, but by the Board of Education itself, that the Nursery School would be more efficiently conducted if it were small. The employment of a superintendent, an experienced assistant and a probationer was envisaged, and it was thought that each of them would be concerned with the whole of the school activities, and might get to know forty or fifty children individually. The alleged danger that

epidemics, to which all schools are liable, would be increased if numbers of very young children were brought together was another factor in limiting the size of the early schools. The Board's pronouncement in the Regulations of 1919 was decisive. "About 40 children," they said, "is probably the ideal number for a Nursery School, but it may sometimes be necessary to provide for more than 40 if the needs of a district are to be at all adequately met. The Board will therefore not refuse to consider proposals for as many as 80 to 100 children; but in no case should the number exceed 100." This regulation accounts for the number of schools that range from 30 to 50 in size. Bradford, in establishing new schools for 80 pupils each, probably had also in mind the Superannuation Rule by which only the service of the head teacher and a second teacher is allowed at present to be recognised for pension purposes. This rule is an effectual impediment to the proper staffing of larger schools, and possibly has something to do with the inadequate proposal recently made in London. In our view it is indefensible, and should be at once abandoned, particularly as it is now understood that the Board is prepared, in the light of experience, to sanction larger schools, and to consider proposals for the proper staffing of them on their merits.

The one conspicuous departure from the orthodox type of school is that of the McMillan School, which can accommodate 260 children. Nominally two schools are here involved, the voluntary school for 160 children, and the L.C.C. school on the Stowage site with accommodation for 100; but these are under one head teacher, and are virtually a single school. Their origin was the determination of Miss Margaret McMillan to prove that the large school could be run efficiently, that it was not dangerous to health, and that it resulted in a considerable saving in the cost per child. By firing certain certificated teachers with her own enthusiasm, and thus inducing them for a time to forgo their pension rights, and by setting up a training institution in connection with the school, Miss McMillan has tackled the problem of staffing, and has succeeded in proving the truth of her theories. This experiment in large-scale organisation has contributed largely to the changed view of the Board of Education. The theory of the small unit is a legacy from that divorce between the Nursery and the Infants' Schools which we have had occasion to regret. By the Board's present recognition of larger schools one impediment to reunion has been removed.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PLACE OF THE NURSERY SCHOOL IN NATIONAL EDUCATION

#### I

##### THE NURSERY SCHOOL AND THE INFANTS' SCHOOL

THE Nursery stage is coming to be regarded as the first, and perhaps the most important, in the whole process of education. It is the foundation on which all the later stages of schooling must be built. In the existing system, the normal age of entry to an Infants' School is five years, with a transfer to an upper school at seven plus. After the transference of suitable children to Central and Secondary Schools, at the age of eleven plus, the remainder stay in their original school till the end of the term in which they become fourteen. In view of the recommendations of the Hadow Report, the tendency will now be to make a general transfer to schools of another type of all children of eleven plus, and if the school-leaving age is raised to fifteen, to make provision in this way for a four years' course of advanced instruction.

Thus there would occur in every child's school career breaks at seven and at eleven.

For more than a generation it has been the practice of Infants' Schools to accept children below the age of five, though not so young as two. On March 31, 1926, no less than 181,492, or 13 per cent. of the available school population, below the age of five were on the registers of the Elementary Schools of this country. They belonged mainly to the three to four and four to five age groups, and the number of them compared with the number—1,367—in the then existing Nursery Schools was very large. This practice of the Infants' School has become an established custom; indeed, it has legal sanction. In Leeds there are 6,000 children below the age of five on the registers of the Elementary Schools; in London the number is said to be 160,000.

The natural thing would be to regard the whole school period before seven—that is from the age of two or three to seven—as the first or infants' stage, the period from seven to eleven as the primary stage, and that from eleven onwards as the post-primary.

But the matter is not so simple as this. Nursery Schools, limited though they are in number, have set up a new ideal for the education of little children—an ideal which combines nurture with education. At present, this nurture is provided

only for children under five, the compulsory age of school attendance, and it is provided generally in a separate building. This question of the age of transfer from the Nursery to the Infants' School raises important and far-reaching issues. The practice of most of the existing Nursery Schools is to transfer their children, except in special cases, at the age of five. This practice, however, is not universally followed, for at the McMillan Nursery School children stay normally till seven and even later.

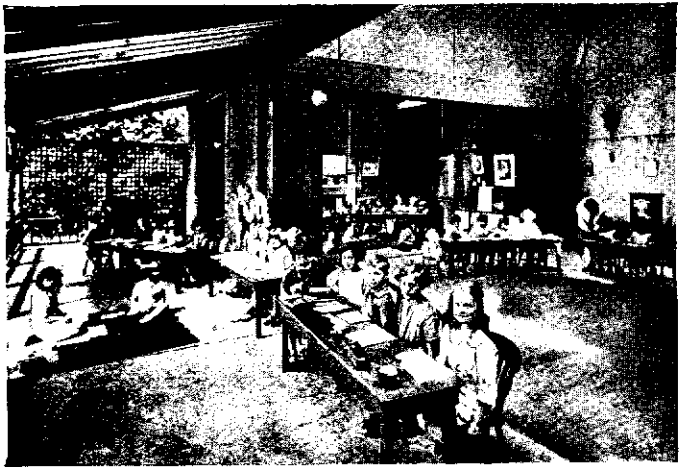
With its free and happy movement and work of an individual kind, the Infants' School has rightly come to be regarded as one of the brightest spots in the whole system of educational organisation. No careful and unprejudiced observer of an up-to-date Infants' School would for one moment contradict this view. But the Infants' School does not profess to combine nurture with education. Our contention is that nurture should be included in the education of all children below seven.

What, then, is the best course to adopt at the present moment? What is really wanted is an improvement in the conditions of the Infants' School or Department. The Infants' School teacher has done wonders under unsuitable conditions, but, at the very best, conditions remain unsuitable.

It should be the aim of the Infants' Schools, while maintaining their present high standard of efficiency, to co-ordinate in every possible way their own methods with those now found so valuable to child-growth and development, and to adopt as soon as possible Nursery School practice throughout, thus avoiding any possibility of a change of school or school methods at the age of five. NURTURE SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE EDUCATION OF ALL CHILDREN UNDER SEVEN. To enable this to be done there must be more liberal staffing arrangements. No effective work of a Nursery type can be done with children under five grouped, as is frequently the case, in classes of fifty under one teacher. The great handicap of the Infants' teacher is understaffing. The young woman who has forty or fifty babies to look after is not likely to welcome opportunities for their nurture, however humane she may be. The whole problem of the development of the present Infants' Schools along Nursery lines is mainly bound up with the question of adequate staffing.

The buildings and equipment will also need greater consideration. Walls will have to be taken down, verandahs built, and sliding doors constructed; asphalt must give place to gardens; hot water and baths, stretcher beds and meals must be provided. The work of converting many of the existing Infants' Schools, so as to provide fully-





AT WORK.



AFTER THE REST-HOUR.  
THE SUTTON NURSERY SCHOOL.

equipped Nursery Schools of the type we envisage, might involve a considerable capital expenditure, but it could be done, and, in the best interests of little children, should be done as soon as possible.

These desirable changes cannot be introduced in all Infants' Schools. Some buildings have already been condemned as radically unsuitable for school use, and as incapable of improvement. Others are necessarily confined to inadequate sites, where sufficient opportunity for free movement is out of the question. Others again are not sufficiently good to justify the expense of reconditioning. In all these instances the position should be surveyed and the possibility of new and improved buildings, not necessarily on the same site, should be considered. Where this course is necessary Local Education Authorities should always provide a school in which the open-air principle is frankly accepted, and in which younger pupils than at present may suitably be accommodated. It should in fact be a combined Nursery and Infants' School. The real danger, to which the National Union of Teachers has recently called attention (*Hadow Report and After*, p. 44), is that, in preparing building programmes, the Local Education Authorities may pay too exclusive regard to the needs of the post-primary School.

"Where new buildings are contemplated," says the Union, "or old buildings are being allocated

to new purposes, it is most necessary that the claims and needs of Infants' and Junior Schools should be fairly and judiciously considered. The Infants' Schools in particular have taught us more than any other type about the physical needs of childhood. In these departments the necessity for light, fresh air and free movement is paramount, and it will be calamitous if so much attention is paid to the new post-primary requirements that the need for modernised provision earlier in school life, so long neglected, is further postponed."

Further, the Union recommends that, "where new schools are built, the value of open-air principles should be frankly accepted, and the need for modernised sanitary provision, and for a liberal supply of hot water should be recognised," and that "where new Infants' Schools are built the arrangements for securing the health of the children should approximate to those that are usual in the best Nursery Schools, and a garden should be provided." The Union obviously does not contemplate the extinction of Infants' Schools, but thinks rather that the time has arrived when they should be given the opportunity for fuller utility, and should assume new and heavier responsibilities.

One result of the reorganisation of Elementary Schools at present in progress is that a number of small Infants' Schools are being amalgamated with

“decapitated” primary departments, so that buildings may be utilised, and economies in staffing effected. This movement continues a process which has been in operation for some years past, and which has reduced severely the effective number of Infants’ departments. We see grave educational objections to amalgamations of this character. They tend to destroy the unity and singleness of aim which in the opinion of the Board should characterise the primary school, now when, almost for the first time it is assuming a separate identity in the educational system. We believe that the number of children in the Infants’ department will be more properly reinforced by the addition, where possible, of younger children, and, in the proposals we have made for extending the functions of the Infants’ School, we see the most powerful guarantee that it will maintain its independent existence.

Little, however, will be gained if Authorities set before themselves the aim of providing indoor education of the present type with access to a garden only in exceptional circumstances. This was, perhaps, as far as the Consultative Committee was able to go in 1908; but the progress of time, the passage of the Education Act of 1918, and the experience of the Nursery School movement, have revealed the possibility of a more desirable practice. Wherever possible Authorities

should provide garden schools with access to indoor shelters. These are particularly necessary in congested areas, though a recent author<sup>1</sup> has urged in this connection the difficulties and the claims of middle-class parents. For some time many of these open-air schools will transfer their children to other schools at the age of five, but ultimately, no doubt, this break, which ought to be unnecessary, will be avoided. There is everything to be said, as an ultimate ideal, for the all-inclusive school in which existing teachers will find a fuller opportunity for service.

Meanwhile, we should move deliberately towards this objective, and the first step is to redress the anomalies that now surround the Nursery School. Impediments to effective staffing, whether provided by the Superannuation Rules, by the Board of Education, or by Local Authorities, should be removed. Nursery Schools should be regarded as a normal part of the educational provision, and not as a Special Service. The Medical Branch of the Board of Education should interest itself in them, as it interests itself in other schools, but should not exert an exclusive control. The educational aspects, equally with the health aspects, should be taken into account by inspectors. In a previous report (*The Next Step in National Education*) we have emphasised the anomalies

<sup>1</sup> *Romulus, or the Future of the Child.*

in post-primary education that arise from the existence of dual administration and overlapping Codes. It is true that both Nursery and Infants' Schools are controlled by the Authority for elementary education in any area. Nevertheless, the existence of two codes of regulations is a serious defect. We look to the elaboration of a Common Code for all education up to the age of seven, which shall incorporate the most valuable features of the former Regulations for Nursery Schools and the relevant parts of the present Elementary Code. The reduced Regulations for Special Services under which Nursery Schools are now administered bear such a close resemblance to the Code that any continued differentiation is difficult to defend. We suggest that the issue of the proposed uniform Regulations would be in accordance with the clear intention of the Education Act, and that it should anticipate the development of the school system which we have in mind. We believe that it would free the Nursery Schools from disabilities under which they now labour, without impairing their value in any way. At the same time, it would destroy a cause of controversy, since the divorce between the Nursery and Infants' Schools has produced an opposition between their rival supporters which proves on analysis to be more fictitious than real.

## II

## THE RELATION OF THE NURSERY SCHOOL TO

## I. NURSERY CLASSES

In some areas (Manchester, for example) Nursery Classes have been established in connection with the existing Elementary Schools. One thousand children are in this way, it is claimed, receiving Nursery School education. It must not be supposed that these Nursery Classes are Manchester's only contribution to the problem of pre-school education. Reference has already been made to three detached Nursery Schools in this city. The policy of the Manchester Education Committee is directed towards providing means for Nursery Education along three lines of development :

1. The provision and maintenance of two or three Municipal Nursery Schools, and the assistance by a small annual grant of all Voluntary Nursery Schools in its area.

2. The establishment of one, two, three, or more Nursery Classes within each Elementary School.

3. In every newly-built Elementary School the provision of an open-air section specially planned and equipped for Nursery Classes.

Each Nursery Class comprises twenty-five children. The reasons advanced for adopting the

principle of attaching Nursery Classes to Infants' Departments are that there is no sharp break in the little child's school life, that Nursery Class maintenance costs slightly less than that of a Nursery School, that the influence of the little children on older scholars in Upper Departments is beneficial, that the parents' relation to the school staff is maintained throughout the child's early educational career, that the influence of the Nursery Class on the Infants' School is of great value, and that there is less delay in extending the means of Nursery School education. These reasons are largely valid, and they emphasise the importance of avoiding a break at five. They suggest also that the advantages given to a portion of the Infants' School might in time be extended to the whole of it.

The Nursery Class serves as a transition stage. Unless it marks the first step towards transforming the whole Infants' Department, and providing it throughout with Nursery School amenities, it is performing but half its function. It should lead towards a stage when the two types of school will be indistinguishable.

The classes in Manchester have the advantage of adequate staffing, and it is curious that, because they are conducted under the Elementary Code, the impediments to the employment of qualified teachers which afflict the Nursery School do not



exist. Not only is there a trained teacher for every twenty-five children, but an admirable use is made of young helpers. These are not called "probationers," a term which is liable to misinterpretation, as it suggests that they will have a future career in teaching, but "student nurses." They are not paid a salary, and cannot be regarded as part of the staff. Rather they are looked upon as students who are continuing their education; they receive maintenance, and the following are the conditions under which they participate in the work of the school:

*Information for Intending Student Nurses*

1. The Manchester Education Committee offers to girls over fourteen years of age who wish eventually to become either sick-nurses or children's nursery nurses a course of continued education up to the age of eighteen plus.

2. Candidates will be expected to do a satisfactory year's work on probation, but the course may terminate at any time subject to one month's notice on either side.

3. Candidates must satisfy the Committee's Medical Officer as to physical fitness for the course.

4. Those completing the full course will be eligible to apply for admission to certain Hospitals (particularly those treating children) or to one of the Nursery Nurses' Training Colleges.

5. The course of continued education offered by the Manchester Education Committee will have a definite bias towards Homecraft and Mothercraft, as each girl will be attached to a Nursery Class for part-time practical work with little children, where she will train as a "Helper" working with a responsible Nursery teacher under the supervision of a head teacher. She will spend the rest of her time attached to a centre for the continuation of her general education, which for girls over the age of sixteen years will have a further vocational bias towards home-making.

6. A maintenance allowance scale is offered as follows :

First year: Normal age 14-15 years . . .	£10 per annum.
Second year: 15-16 years . . .	£15 "
Third year: 16-17 " . . .	£25 "
Fourth year: 17-18 " . . .	£35 "

7. Preference will be given to girls who have completed a full-time course of general education at a Secondary or Central School.

8. It is believed that such a course will appeal to the type of girl who is fond of children and whose interests are of a practical kind, and that it will provide a useful preliminary training, both educational and professional, between the full-time school-leaving period and the age of admission for Hospital and Nursery nurse training.

We believe the Nursery Classes we have described indicate exactly how Nursery Schools in general ought to be staffed, and in the new

Manchester schools built on the open-air plan, the provision for the physical needs of the children approaches that which we regard as adequate. Bradford also proposes to make arrangements of this type in new schools. Nevertheless, in old buildings, the environment at the nursery stage leaves much to be desired. The absence of a midday meal is also to be regretted.

Elsewhere Nursery Classes have been instituted without the safeguards adopted in Manchester. The classes may be large, and the "student nurse" is unknown. The class is conducted within four walls, and, while the children may have toys and flowers, they have not baths, proper feeding, or a garden. Classes of this type serve merely to illustrate the crying need for something better, and are no effective substitute for the open-air Nursery School. They are sometimes defended because they are cheap, an argument upon which it is unnecessary to comment. The cost per child in a well-conducted Manchester Nursery Class is very little less than in a Nursery School, but a midday meal is not provided, the medical supervision is not so constant, and, most important of all, only a part of the Head Teacher's salary is included in the charge.

Where new Infants' Schools are concerned, the way is comparatively simple. It should be made incumbent upon all Local Authorities building

new Infants' Schools to plan them on recognised Nursery School lines, making the acquisition of sufficient land for a garden a first consideration.

IN ANY CASE, THE PROVISION OF FURTHER ACCOMMODATION FOR THE UNDER-FIVES, WHETHER IN *ad hoc* NURSERY SCHOOLS OR IN EXISTING DEPARTMENTS OF INFANTS' SCHOOLS, IS AN URGENT NEED.

## 2. DAY NURSERIES

The relation of the Day Nursery to the Nursery School should not be misunderstood. Though conducted on similar lines, says the Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board, they are not identical. The Day Nursery, as a rule, admits children from nine months to school age. It is intended primarily for children of mothers who are obliged to go out to work. Children are retained for the whole day (and, as a rule, every day), and are given three meals daily. A fee is charged (about 5s. a week). The Nursery is in charge of a matron, who may be a hospital nurse or may be Crèche-trained, assisted by a staff of Nursery nurses. A visiting teacher may be employed for the older children, but she need not be certificated. Every Day Nursery has a doctor. Its main purpose is custody and domestic care. The Nursery School, on the other hand, admits children of from two to five years, not only

on the grounds of health and social expediency, but also for education. The hours, at present, are shorter than in the Day Nursery, but there is usually, though not invariably, a midday meal. A small fee for meals is charged (about 2s. a week). The school is in charge of a certificated teacher aided by qualified assistants, and is usually visited by a school nurse. Its purpose, as we have shown, is the medical, physical, and educational care of the child.

How far the two institutions could be combined so as to serve the best interests of the smaller children is a matter now under public discussion. There are the 99 Day Nurseries at present recognised by the Ministry of Health and accommodating 3,364 children. It is better that the Nursery School should form part of our educational system rather than that, with the Day Nursery, it should form part of Health Administration. On the other hand, in order to prevent overlapping in the same district, it might be possible, in the absence of any other arrangement, to fix definite age-periods, say up to three years for the Day Nursery and from three to seven for the Nursery School.

### 3. CHILD WELFARE WORK

The relation of the Nursery School to Child Welfare Work is of great importance. Schools

for Mothers, School Clinics, and Nursery Schools should work in the closest harmony. Indeed, all these activities, falling into their right places, might constitute a School of Child Welfare rich in possibilities for the future of social and educational work.

#### 4. THE POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

The relation of the Nursery School to the upper ranges of school life has assumed a new importance since the publication of the Hadow Report. It will be recalled that the Report advocates the transfer, where this can be satisfactorily arranged, of all children of eleven plus to another school, where courses of advanced instruction may be arranged. Such advanced instruction, it is suggested, shall contain large elements of practical work, including handicraft for boys, and domestic management and mothercraft for girls.

What the Nursery School, if established on an extensive scale, could do in the direction of providing actual experience in the care of children is at once obvious. There would be to hand the very means for helping to supply the deficiencies in parental knowledge to which references were made in discussing the reasons for the establishment of Nursery Schools. It would be of inestimable value to all adolescent girls, and

the opportunity of practical work with children afforded by the Nursery Schools and Classes would be welcomed alike by the parents and by the head mistresses as a necessary part of every girl's education. The prospect of seeing the older girls of our schools taking an actual part in the bathing, dressing, and feeding of the little ones, of taking a share, however small, in the management of these larger homes, and of sharing the indoor exercises of these small children, is an attractive one. What it would mean to the young girl herself cannot be estimated.

The introduction of this kind of practical work on the part of the older girls would do something to make the establishment of Nursery Schools on a larger scale more possible, by providing in a natural way some of the helpers needed in the schools. For the first time, owing to the publication of the Hadow Report, it is possible to consider girls' secondary education apart from University demands. Whatever should be the vocational bias of girls, whatever may be their trade or occupation, the majority of girls will marry and become mothers ; some training in Child Welfare should be an essential part of their education. Through this natural interest they are best prepared for life. Hygiene, both of body and mind, is best taught with reference to children. The practical occupations of

needlework, nursing, and cooking become interesting if they are associated with the care of children. Some of this has been taught in the Elementary School, but while the school age ends at fourteen, girls are too young to profit fully by such a course. The reorganisation of post-primary schools, and the raising of the school age to fifteen, will offer new possibilities. Such an arrangement would inevitably lead to the raising of the standard of qualifications among those employed in the Nursery School itself. The additional work and expense connected with visiting scholars from Senior Schools is a matter of adjustment. It is not a question of introducing a form of cheap labour, or of the reintroduction of the old type of school monitor; it is rather a question of girls learning one of the normal tasks of life in the only way in which it can be learned—by actually doing it. Such a connection between Post-Primary and Nursery Schools is one that should be encouraged in every possible way in the interests of the girls themselves.

The relation of the Nursery School to the Camp and Open-air School lies outside the scope of this Report; but it is right to point out in this connection the increasing tendency nowadays to carry on the conditions of the Nursery School into schools for older children. Usually the Open-air School or Class caters for the more delicate



children, and it is a tribute to the Nursery School that its methods are found effective with older children. It is also noteworthy that modern school buildings are approximating in their construction to Open-air Schools, and we suggest that all schools for infants should follow this model. At present, the Nursery School influences the system from the outside ; one day it will be an integral part of it. When all schools are Open-air Schools, any need for a break at the age of five will probably be unnecessary.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE STAFFING OF THE NURSERY SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE

#### I

#### QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING OF STAFF

STAFFING is the crux of the Nursery School problem. As a consequence of the Education Act, 1918, the Board of Education issued Regulations to govern the conduct of Nursery Schools. The following paragraph (24), taken from those Regulations, refers to the staffing of a Nursery School :

**THE STAFF.**—The staff of a Nursery School shall comprise three classes, (1) Superintendent, (2) Adult Assistants and Nurses, (3) Probationers.

*Superintendents.*—The success or failure of a Nursery School will depend primarily on the superintendent. She should possess adequate knowledge of child-hygiene, and should be capable of undertaking responsibility for the physical welfare of children between the ages of two and five years. It is equally expected that she should not be required to perform the duty of nurse or matron. Whilst emphasis is laid on her capacity to organise the health side of a Nursery School, the superintendent must also be able to direct

the training of the children with breadth of outlook and imagination. In short, the work of a superintendent of a Nursery School necessarily demands a high standard of capacity and a varied experience both personal and professional. It will not always be easy—especially at first—for Local Education Authorities and managers to find the right person, but the field of choice should be sensibly widened as time goes on. . . .

*Assistant Staff.*—The assistant staff will, it is assumed, be composed partly of women possessing nursing qualifications, who will be employed mainly in attending to the physical welfare of the children, especially the younger children, and partly of women who possess qualifications and experience for the training and teaching of young children. . . .

A suitably qualified nurse should usually be attached to a Nursery School. She need not be a whole-time officer, but a daily visit is advisable in order that minor ailments, etc., may be referred to her. . . . The nurse might be dispensed with if the superintendent possessed a sufficient knowledge of children's ailments to undertake the necessary duties.

*Probationers.*—It may be expected that some young persons under the age of eighteen will wish to take up work in Nursery Schools with the object of fitting themselves for permanent employment in them or occasionally as children's nurses. Probationers should not be regarded as a form of cheap labour: their number should be limited;

adequate provision should be made for their training, and, if they have not received full-time education up to the age of eighteen, for any necessary attendance at continuation classes.

These Regulations have been withdrawn, but we must not assume that the Board now objects to the introduction of unqualified women. Their weakness was that there was nothing in them to indicate exactly what is the training to be demanded of either of the classes constituting the staff, or what should be the rate of staffing. It may be noted, however, that the Board in these Regulations did not fall into the error of saying that the superintendent must be a "motherly person." "Motherliness" is, of course, an essential qualification in a superintendent, but there are other equally, if not more, important qualifications that are required. The superintendent must have a thorough understanding and working knowledge of child-life and child-psychology. The lack of this knowledge on the part of many mothers has been already referred to. To substitute for an ignorant mother in the home an ignorant mother in the Nursery School might bring no gain whatever to the child. The work of the superintendent of a Nursery School demands, as the Board's Regulations suggest, a high standard of capacity and a varied experience

both personal and professional. She must be a highly skilled teacher who has received the requisite training.

Similarly, and for the same reasons, the assistants must also be trained and skilled persons. The introduction into Nursery Schools as assistants of those who have received no proper training would, in our opinion, be harmful.

The idea that assistants may be differentiated into those possessing nursing qualifications, who will attend mainly to the physical needs of the children, and those who possess qualifications for teaching and training, should be accepted with reserve. The child's life is a single entity, and to suggest that one person should be engaged exclusively in teaching as such and another engaged exclusively in attending to physical needs would be to cut one life into two. In the training of Nursery School teachers this view of their work should be avoided. This does not mean that the Nursery School teacher is to become merely a nurse, but it does mean that, as nurture plays so important a part in the daily routine of the school, her knowledge and training in this should be as liberal and as definite as her educational training. It is also necessary to insist that a Nursery School teacher, whose work, as has been shown, lies with the most critical years of childhood, should not be regarded as inferior to any other type of

teacher. The idea that anyone is good enough for this work is wholly pernicious, and is as harmful as the suggestion that "motherliness" is a sufficient qualification. Nor should it be possible for those who cannot succeed elsewhere, especially in other departments of school work, to slide naturally towards the Nursery Schools. The educational care of small children under the age of five presents difficulties at least equal to, if not greater than, those which arise in the care of older children, and teachers for them should be selected with scrupulous care. The competent Nursery School teacher should be one whose previous education has not been inferior to that of any other sort of teacher, and the length of her training should be equal to that demanded from one who will teach in schools of other types. The actual course followed in training will be different, but the hall-mark impressed at the conclusion of training should be the same as for any other teacher. In this way, with the standard of qualification kept high, there can be no question of an inferior status for the Nursery School teacher or for her work.<sup>1</sup>

It has been said that a teacher with nursing experience would possess a happy combination of faculties, but this combination has not always been

<sup>1</sup> See Miss Grace Owen's pamphlet.

the objective of the Women's Training Colleges. A broader view of the teacher's training is now gaining ground, and in such colleges as the Darlington, Gipsy Hill, and the McMillan Centre students are encouraged to obtain first-hand knowledge of the Nursery Schools in the vicinity of their colleges and to take a fair share in the actual work of the schools. It is recognised that, though culture is necessary, it is not sufficient for a Nursery School teacher, and that training in the processes of nurture is needed also if the demands of the Nursery School are to be met. If Nursery School teachers have to train helpers as well as have charge of children they should take the ordinary two-year training, and add a third year in which to specialise in Nursery School work.

Though it is necessary to give a course of training especially devised to meet the needs of the Nursery School teachers, it is not desirable to train teachers for work with children under five only. Students may train as teachers for both Nursery and Infants' Schools during a recognised two-year course, or trained Certificated teachers may take a third-year course.

The training course for Nursery and Infants' Schools teachers, though specially devised, is as strenuous as that for the teacher of high standards in the Elementary Schools. Nursery School work

is highly skilled, and puts a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of the teachers for the health and training and development of very young children. Schools have heartily welcomed, for any class, the students who have had a combined Nursery and Infants' School training, because of their close knowledge of little children from all points of view.

The course of training set out below keeps a fourfold professional aim in view: (1) To prepare for the physical care of the child practically as well as theoretically. (2) To provide for a study of early mental development based upon close contact with children. (3) To develop the students' social interests by studies of the neighbourhood of the Nursery Schools where they practise. (4) To keep them sensible of intellectual interests and cultural developments.

A characteristic of the training is the continuous contact with children in Nursery and Infants' Schools. To be able to "give lessons" in a school is not what is wanted. A school community to care for is necessary to the healthy life of any college.

The following is the scheme of training set out by the Nursery Schools Association, and approved by, among other organisations, the National Union of Teachers.



### ENTRANCE QUALIFICATION

As required by the Board of Education for students entering recognised Training Colleges. Then—

(a) Two-year course, which should lead to the Teacher's Certificate of the Board of Education.

(b) Third-year course. Open to trained certificated teachers, including holders of the Higher Certificate of the National Froebel Union, who are college-trained.

*Note.*—Untrained Teachers, including those holding the Higher Certificate of the National Froebel Union, should be required to take the two-year course.

(This note has not the support of the N.U.T., which holds that in the matter of further training it is not necessary to distinguish between those who have obtained the certificated qualification by different methods.)

### FINAL EXAMINATION

1. It is recommended that the final test of proficiency should be provided for by an "alternative examination."

2. That credit in this examination should be given for students' own records of observations, experiments, etc., made during the course of training as well as for written papers.

3. That a minimum of twelve weeks' practical work in schools shall be required.

(A) TWO-YEAR COURSE

1. *Education*

(a) Theory :

1. Child-study and Psychology.
2. Principles of Education.
3. Administration and Organisation.
4. Studies in the History of Education, including the Place of the Nursery School in the Community.

(b) Practice :

1. Work in Nursery and Infants' Schools.
2. Visits to other Nursery and Special Schools.
3. Parents' Clubs and Visits to Children's Homes.

2. *Nature Study*

(a) Theory : Introduction to Biology through Nature Study and Gardening.

(b) Practice : The Making of Children's Gardens.

3. *Hygiene*

(a) Theory :

1. Elementary Studies in Anatomy and Physiology.
2. Personal Hygiene.
3. Conditions necessary for the Healthy Growth and Development of the Young Child, including the Hygiene of Food and Drink.
4. Study of the Spread of Infection.
5. The Child Welfare Movement.

(b) Practice :

Work in Hospitals, Clinics, or Out-patients' Departments, First-Aid, Visits to Public Health Institutions.

4. *Literature*

(a) General :

The course to include some study of Drama, Poetry, Prose, Myths, and Folk-lore.

(b) Professional :

Literature for Children, Story-telling, Dramatisation.

5. *Speech Training*

(a) For the Student.

(b) For the Children. Studies of the Best Methods of training Young Children.

6. *Music*

(a) General :

1. Simple Theory of Music.
2. Ear-training.
3. Singing.
4. Eurhythmics.
5. Musical Appreciation.

*Note.*—The study of some musical instrument is encouraged.

(b) Professional :

1. Songs and Rhythm for Children.
2. Singing Games.
3. Children's Band.

*7. Art and Needlework*

(a) General course of Handwork, which should include practice in the making and mending of things needed for the Nursery School and Garden.

(b) Special study of one Craft, or Drawing and Design.

- (c) 1. Studies of work suitable for children.  
2. Story Illustrations and Memory Drawing.  
3. Printing.  
4. The Making of Children's Garments, Cookery for Young Children.

(B) THIRD-YEAR COURSE

This course, which may be modified to meet the needs of individual students, should preserve the character of a Refresher Course. Visits to Nursery Schools and to other kinds of social and educational institutions should be encouraged.

Opportunities for meeting workers in other fields, e.g. Health Visitors, Doctors, Factory Inspectors, etc., should be given with a view to the understanding of social problems.

Educational tours at home or abroad should be organised by the College and counted as part of the College Course.

The full participation in the recreative and social life of the College should be considered important, especially in view of the isolation of many Nursery School workers.

1. *Psychology and Education*

(a) Advanced Course in Psychology. The Psychology of Health. Special Studies of Backward or Defective Children and of Supernormal Children. Religion in Early Childhood.

(b) More advanced work in History and Administration of Education.

(c) Social Education. Parents' Clubs. Co-operation with other Bodies. Practice in Speaking.

(d) Practical Training in the Supervision of Young Teachers.

2. *Hygiene*

(a) Physiology and Child-hygiene or Studies in Biology.

(b) Mothercraft and Domestic Science.

3. *Elective Course*

in any subject for which need or desire is felt.

*Note.*—Refresher Courses of three months should be organised from time to time.

## II

## THE SCALE OF STAFFING

The scale of staffing is as important as the qualifications of those who comprise the staff. We think that every Nursery School should be in

charge of a fully trained and certificated teacher, who should be responsible for the conduct and efficiency of the school as a whole, and that every group of not more than forty children should be in charge of a fully trained and certificated teacher. It is not reasonable to expect that she could deal unaided with even so large a number as forty. There is a good deal of routine work in a Nursery School that can be done efficiently, not only by teachers, but by others who are in process of being trained in the management of children. We therefore recommend that a number of student nurses should be provided in each school. These should be regarded as receiving preparation for various nursing and domestic avocations, and should be aided, where necessary, by maintenance grants. The number of children of which an individual student nurse should be in charge at any one time under the supervision of the trained assistant should not exceed ten, and if the children are very young should be less than this number.

How these student nurses and also other helpers might be secured is shown elsewhere in this Report. Miss Stevinson, in her book *The Open-Air Nursery School*, suggests that the McMillan Nursery School is fortunate in being able to draw upon the students of the Training Centre connected with that school for

help, and hints that a Training-Centre attached to all Nursery Schools would solve the staffing problem. The Nursery Schools in Darlington and at Gipsy Hill and Goldsmiths' College have the advantage of assistance from the colleges in their vicinity. It is desirable, perhaps, that every Nursery School should be a training-centre (the numbers available for such assistance are, however, strictly limited) for the student nurses, and for the pupils of Modern Schools who need training for the responsibilities of later life. The Nursery School, under such conditions, will perform a useful double function. How this might be done to the advantage of the helpers themselves has already been considered. But the main point is, that it is on the proper staffing of the Nursery School that much of the successful development of the school depends.

### III

#### THE RELATION OF THE NURSERY SCHOOL STAFF WITH THE STAFF OF THE POST- PRIMARY SCHOOL

In order that relations between the staffs of both kinds of school may be harmonious, the double function of the Nursery School must be recognised. The training of the under-sevens will then, as we suggest, go hand-in-hand with

the training of the adolescent girl. To ensure this, there must be a disposition on the part of the staff of the Nursery School to welcome the co-operation of the Post-Primary Schools, and a similar disposition on the part of the latter to make every possible use of the facilities for practical instruction provided by the former.



## CHAPTER VII

### SOME FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

THE development of Nursery Schools has been, as we have shown, extremely slow. In twenty years not more than twenty-seven have been recognised, and, of these, scarcely any two are alike in respect of their main features. It is difficult, therefore, to make a reliable comparison of the capital costs involved in establishing them. Obviously, the cost of sites will vary considerably. The capital outlay, according to the official figures, of each of the proposed new Nursery Schools for London is put at £8,550 (including site, building, and equipment). Dr. Graham estimates the capital costs of a Nursery School in Leeds to accommodate forty-five children to be as follows: site, £1,000; buildings, £5,500; furniture, £300. For a school to accommodate twice that number the estimate is: site, £1,000; buildings, £7,000; furniture, £450. It will be seen that these estimates approximate very closely to the London figures. The actual expenditure on the buildings and furniture of Princeville and Lilycroft Schools at Bradford may be compared with these es-

timates. These were: buildings, £4,333 and £4,624; furniture, £320 and £290 respectively.

The main items of recurrent expenditure fall under the following heads:

- (a) Interest and loan charges.
- (b) Salaries of staff.
- (c) Fuel, light, and cleaning.
- (d) Food.

A considerable proportion of the outlay on food is repaid by parents and others, although in most of the existing Nursery Schools the amount repaid is below the cost of supplying the food and service. Where the Nursery School is in a relatively prosperous area, parents willingly subscribe for the cost involved, and, in some instances, pay the cost of dinners for the poorer children; in the poorer areas, where at present the majority of the Nursery Schools are established, some of the parents find it difficult, if not impossible, to pay the full cost, while others are able to pay nothing at all. The actual annual expenditure on food for ten Nursery Schools taken at random shows the average cost to be £4 per head, of which almost £3 is repaid. When it is remembered that the average cost per school day works out at 3*d.* per head, of which an average of 2*d.* is received from the parents, it cannot be said that the expenditure under this head is lavish or extravagant.

The provision of fuel, light, and cleaning amounts to from 10 to 15 per cent. of the annual cost of maintaining the school, and, like the interest and loan charges, is a more or less fixed amount.

The main expense on maintenance charges is of course that of the staff. In all the accounts to which we have had access the cost of salaries and wages is seen to vary from two-fifths to three-fifths of the total maintenance charges. At the Hunslet School, Leeds, where the average number on the roll is forty, the total cost per unit per annum is £17 11s. 2d., of which £8 14s. 4½d. is on account of salaries; that is, it is about one-half of the total. In Bradford it is slightly less. In any new schemes that are contemplated the cost of salaries must be regarded as a considerable, but essential, factor. We have already expressed our belief that right staffing is the crux of the Nursery School problem.

The following figures represent the approximate annual cost per head (excluding sites) of the undermentioned schools :

		£	s.	d.
Selly Oak (Birmingham)	. . . 50 children	13	0	0
Summer Lane (Birmingham)	. . . 68 "	12	15	0
Lilycroft (Bradford)	. . . 60 "	21	15	0
Princeville (Bradford)	. . . 60 "	18	13	0
St. Ann's R.C. (Bradford)	. . . 80 "	15	0	0
George Dent School (Darlington)	. . . 80 "	12	0	0
Hunslet (Leeds)	. . . 40 "	12	15	0
Ardwick (Manchester)	. . . 30 "	12	0	0
Encombe Place (Salford)	. . . 60 "	12	0	0

It is clear that the costs are in excess of the average cost of an Elementary School place (£11 6s. 8d.), and there is little doubt that, if schools are small, they will be more expensive still. This can be seen, so far as capital costs are concerned, from the Leeds figures, while Miss McMillan, who estimates her maintenance costs at £12, states emphatically that large numbers keep down the cost.

Though the cost per head in a small Nursery School is higher than the cost per head in an Elementary School, it is not nearly so high as that in a Secondary School. In fact, the common impression that the maintenance costs of Nursery Schools are prohibitive is a delusion. "The large Nursery School has proved extremely cheap" (*Education*, February 17, 1928). The financial obstacles to developing such schools may be overestimated very easily.

It should be noted that the present method adopted by the Board of Education of paying grant to the provided Nursery Schools is to treat them as a Special Service and contribute half the total amount expended, the other half being provided from the rates. It is the plea of this Report that the Nursery School should be incorporated in the ordinary educational system. In that event, it would be removed from the category of Special Services, and the necessary

alterations would be made in the Elementary School Code to admit of such incorporation. The Nursery Schools would then be grant-aided on the same financial basis as other schools, and a smaller proportion of their cost would fall upon the Local Education Authority. It is believed that this change in both administration and finance would lead at no distant date to the establishment of an increasing number of Nursery Schools.

In view of our recommendation that Nursery Schools should first be provided in crowded and slum areas, the high cost of land is, doubtless, a serious consideration, but it need not present an insuperable obstacle. London has made a move in this direction in two overcrowded areas, and other towns are showing similar activity. What we urge is that the problem should be tackled at once on a larger scale, either by the acquisition of sites and the erection of new buildings of an inexpensive but effective type, or by the adaptation and use of existing school buildings. We contend that new schools should, as far as possible, be provided for children under seven, the existing schools being used, wherever possible, for other educational purposes. In the meantime, Authorities should take steps, as far as the limitations imposed by unsuitable buildings make it possible, to include Nursery Classes in Infants' Schools and

provide throughout the amenities of the Nursery Schools. Where this is not possible, we suggest that, if, say, any appreciable number of parents desire a Nursery School and undertake to send their children to it if it is established, it should be incumbent on a Local Authority to make some attempt to provide such a school.

When it is considered what the Nursery School means to a child who goes on to the Elementary School at the age of five—its improved physical condition and the training that it has received—it can hardly be doubted that the nation would be amply rewarded for incurring the additional expenditure which the Nursery School would involve, if only in order to obviate a much larger expenditure later on. It is surely in the best interests of the nation, as well as of the children themselves, that they should from the start be in a condition of health which will enable them to withstand the attacks of preventible disease, and to attain such physical and mental efficiency that they can take full advantage of their later schooling.

It is not impossible, we would urge, to establish in each Local Education Authority's area at least two Nursery Schools, which would mean an immediate provision of over 700 schools. Even this number would be entirely inadequate; and the aim should be to provide Nursery School places

for at least 100,000 children annually for the next five years, the maintenance costs of which would be less than one and a half million pounds a year. In view of the large amount of positive good, both mental and physical, resulting to children who attend the existing Nursery Schools, this expenditure for which we plead may be recommended with confidence as a sound investment.

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