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1934



*An impression of the school*

This school was opened a little over three years ago in a rapidly growing district four miles from Ipswich. Previously there was no elementary school in the parish, everything had to start from the beginning. It was designed as an Area school, built round a quadrangle, with three classrooms on each side and a woodwork room and a domestic science room at either end. At the corners, there are three staff rooms, one for the headmaster, one for the assistant masters and the third for the mistresses, and a canteen kitchen.

As there are four contributory schools from which senior children cycle from two to three miles to this school, it is necessary to provide hot dinners; the charge is 1s. per week. The children help to

prepare the food under the direction of a paid cook: they lay the tables, wait on diners, clear away and wash up in turn; they also help to keep the accounts.

The classroom, turned into a dining room for the time being, has the atmosphere of a restaurant; the desks are grouped together to form tables, covered with white cloths and decorated with flowers from the school garden. Good table manners are inculcated and encouraged.

After two years had passed, the number on the roll increased from 183 to 350 and it was necessary to increase the accommodation. It was decided to build a separate block to house the Juniors and to use the original building as a Senior school. As the two houses

are separated by lawns and flower beds, that institutional barrack-like appearance which so often mars the larger elementary school has been effectively destroyed.

### A School in a Garden

When the school was opened the L.E.A. and the Board of Education, through the H.M.I., gave the head teacher a free hand in preparing the schemes of work and the time-table. The principle adopted was that the children should be given a thorough grounding in the three R's in the Junior school and that on entering the Senior school they should devote more and more time to practical work as they advanced in age (the academically-minded children having been eliminated by the Scholarship Examination) until in the fourth or last year, half the week would be given to practical work.

In a short article it is only possible to give a brief outline of our aims and to indicate by a few examples how we put our ideas into practice. We endeavour to teach the children how to live so as to get the best out of life; we strive to get down to realities.

To do this three things were necessary:—

- (1) To make a suitable environment and to create a right atmosphere.
- (2) To enable the children to learn through doing.
- (3) To teach the community spirit.

As the school is situated in beautiful heath land and is fortunate in having some fine old oaks on the site, our task was made easier and we were able to make a charming, well-established garden in a short space of time. Lawns were sown and on them flower beds were made. This involved a lot of surveying and levelling, and a carpet bed of geometrical design provided practical work in measurement. A bed of rhododendrons was planted and the lawns were surrounded by flowering shrubs, including many uncommon and interesting varieties. A rock garden, a small water garden and a sundial were constructed, all of which provided excellent opportunities for more practical work. Altogether, including the kitchen garden, we have two acres under cultivation.

Having made our environment, the next step was to arrange that in all subjects the children

should learn through doing and should acquire knowledge for themselves by experience and by following the scientist's motto, 'I search'. With this end in view, we have experimental plots in the garden to test out the value of chemical fertilizers. Small plots of equal size are treated with various artificial manures and each plot is planted with an equal number of potatoes. The appearance of the crop is recorded weekly in the garden diaries. In the autumn the potatoes are taken up and weighed and the results compared with those of the control plot where no chemical manure has been used. Thus the children learn at first hand and by experience the value of artificial manure. The process involves the use of weights and measures, calculation of costs and percentages, the use of graphs and the compilation of records.

### Doing and Learning

To quote another example: we have a large piece of land set aside for the cultivation and propagation of East Malling Fruit Stocks. Type 1 and Type 2 are quick growing and produce fairly large trees. Type 9 is slow growing and makes a dwarf tree which comes into bearing earlier than trees of the other types. The named and numbered types are planted on separate plots in proximity to each other. The distinguishing characteristics and rates of growth are compared and recorded. The stocks are then budded or grafted according to season, and the effect of the stock on the resultant tree is, in the course of time, clearly demonstrated. The plot is the textbook which supplies all the information.

This experiment attracted the attention of the parents and the headmaster was asked to lecture at the Local Gardeners' Association on the subject.

Another effort to learn by doing led to the surveying of the local churchyard and making a plan to scale, putting in the graves, thus making a permanent record of the burials, which hung in the vestry. Incidentally, this led to a request from a neighbouring Parish Council for the elder scholars to survey the parish allotments as there was a dispute as to the size of the plots and the amount of rent which should accordingly be paid. We were

able, after a couple of visits, to settle the dispute to the satisfaction of all concerned.

### Co-operation and the Community

In order to teach the community spirit, by which I mean demonstrating how the various members of a community depend on and help each other, the woodwork room and the domestic science room are not regarded as separate departments, but are considered as part of the school as a whole, existing as a means to help in carrying on the work of educating the children.

The boys make apparatus for use in the science room; apparatus for games, plate racks and saucepan stands for the girls, while the girls make aprons for use in the woodwork room and shorts for the boys to wear on the sports field. If anything requires washing the domestic science room is available; if any repairs are needed or a new piece of furniture is required, the woodwork class willingly undertakes the task. The boys built a cycle shed to enable the girls to store their cycles under cover. The vegetables grown in the school garden are used in the school canteen. In short, the school is a self-contained unit.

As the school is situated near an important aerodrome it was considered appropriate that the boys should understand the working of the internal combustion engine. In one corner of the workshop is an old motor-cycle where mechanically minded boys can find out 'how it works' and can take it to pieces and re-assemble it again. This provides material for working out the C.C. of the cylinder, gear ratios, etc.

In many cookery rooms, the quantities of food prepared by each individual child are too small for the teaching to be really practical. We overcome this difficulty by dealing with the quantities required by a large family and utilizing the cooked food as part of the canteen dinners. When teaching housewifery we get down to realities, for the girls actually clean some of the school windows and polish school furniture. After a lesson on distemping the girls distemped a classroom. The pupils bring garments from home to be washed and mended in the domestic science lesson.

The Board of Education new P.T. syllabus

demanded that some kind of mat be provided for each child during the P.T. lesson. A light duckboard, about 4 ft. long and 1 ft. 10 inches wide and hinged in the middle, was designed, and the boys constructed two sets of forty each for the use of the school.

### Practical Work Predominates

In order to find time to carry out all this practical work, we experimented by cutting down the time allotted to arithmetic from 300 minutes to 80 minutes (two periods of 40 minutes each) per week; for applied arithmetic, as I have endeavoured to show, continually enters into the practical work. So far we have not found that the arithmetic has deteriorated in the school, but on the contrary, it has become a real live subject. The old idea of writing essays on set subjects has been abolished and the composition now largely consists of writing accurate and concise descriptions of work done during the week in gardening and science and other lessons, together with accounts of educational visits to historical buildings, factories, London, the Zoo, and so forth.

Debates on various subjects form a part of the English lessons and give an opportunity for developing oral composition, the power of correct thinking and clear speaking, and for cultivating a critical mind. Dramatic performances help to correct the self-consciousness so characteristic of the country child.

Art is fostered by going direct to nature and the children are encouraged to express themselves in any medium they like, be it pastel, paint or charcoal, when going on outdoor sketching expeditions. They design covers for any books they may be making, or design and cut stencils when such are required, but they are told that designs, as a rule, must be for some practical purpose.

Each class has a games period once a week, when inter-house games and league matches are played on the school playing field which has an area of about four acres.

The result of all these useful activities is a happy school where corporal punishment has proved unnecessary, and where the children delight to attend, because, as one boy expressed it, 'There are so many interesting things to do.'