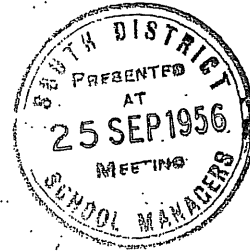
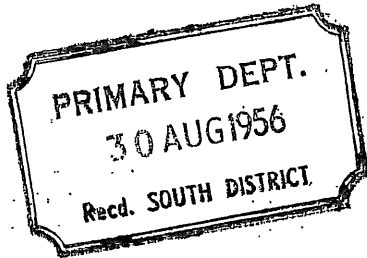


MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



Report by H.M. Inspectors

on

COTTESBROOKE COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL,
ACOCKS GREEN, BIRMINGHAM.

Inspected on

9th, 10th and 11th July, 1956.

NOTES

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CURZON STREET, LONDON, W.1.

This junior and infant school was opened in temporary accommodation of wooden construction in 1933. In 1944 a canteen was opened and a few years ago three rooms of a neighbouring Methodist Church were taken into use as an annexe. In the development plan the school is scheduled to be transferred to a new site.

There are 494 children on roll, organised in 13 classes: 5 infant, 1 transition and 7 junior. On admission the children spend a period in the reception class and then the abler children are promoted within their own age groups. The method of promotion in the junior classes is complicated and it is customary for children to spend two years in the same class. The teachers are at pains to avoid, as far as possible, the difficulties of this system by grouping within the classes. The staff, including the headmistress and a young supernumerary teacher awaiting entrance to college, number 15.

Ten classes are housed in the main school and three in the annexe. The main premises consist of five wooden huts, of which four are connected by a central wooden hall. All the rooms are small and some are rather dark; they are apt to be stuffy in summer and cold in winter. The three rooms set aside for the staff are small and airless. Sanitary provision leaves something to be desired: 12 basins and 2 sinks only for the children and no piped hot water for the staff; 5 water closets only for the junior girls. On the other hand the huts enclose two well-kept and very pleasing plots of grass and beds of flowers. The annexe provides two very large and one very small room; there is no provision here for washing.

The supply of text-books is ample and it would appear that the main emphasis should now for some time be placed upon the purchase of more books for the new reference library and of better books for the class libraries.

The children are drawn from a pleasant suburb, from which, however, movement is continual, since families in this area often have to share a house. Many parents are said to be keenly interested in their children's prospects of transfer to grammar schools. The children generally look well cared for and present an attractive appearance, some of them wearing school blazers, in the assemblies and dinners. In two of the assemblies held during the inspection the headmistress gave trenchant and interesting talks to the children; in the other the oldest children conducted the entire service. Dinners which are taken in the hall by about 150 children are carefully disciplined; thus no child may talk while he has food on his plate. Open days are held in the Christmas and Summer terms, the one during a Gala Week when a flower show, a painting competition and a fancy dress parade are held. The staff also holds its own social functions twice a year. To the inspectors the children were deferential but quickly became communicative.

In the infant classes opportunities are provided for the children to express themselves in play, drama, movement to music, art and free writing; the grass plot is particularly useful on fine days for activities. The standard of reading reached by the oldest infants suggests that they are beyond some of the simple exercises in spelling and comprehension, which they do in so-called 'work-books'. For number some good apparatus is available to give a useful experience preliminary to later symbolic work. Social training is not neglected and religious instruction is an early formative experience. In the junior classes there is strong emphasis upon and a steady development of the basic skills. The speech of the children is usually pleasant and audible. There is much formal work in grammar and comprehension, but much free expression, taking the form of stories, plays, and accounts of interests and hobbies, is also to be found in the books of the abler children. The teaching of reading, except in a few difficult cases, is successfully tackled, and some of the children are beginning to learn how to find out information for themselves. The quality of some of the prose and verse, read or learnt by heart, seems to be rather low; on the other hand some fine passages from the Bible are committed to memory. For history, geography and nature study useful text-books are available, and the abler children compose their own notes and narratives. Arithmetic is systematically taught according to methods clearly set out in the scheme of work; in general the work is accurate and well presented. The cultural subjects receive due attention. In needle-work the girls are given a good elementary training in stitchery and in knitting

and make useful and attractive little articles. Very few of the children appear to change for physical education, and, though the work that was seen was energetic, it was felt that these strong and intelligent children might have developed more skill.

The headmistress, appointed to this, her third headship, in 1940, has retained vigour and purposefulness and her strong personality is a driving force in the school. Three teachers worthily hold posts of special responsibility. All the teachers, of whom one has served for many years in the school and several for more than three years, make strenuous demands upon themselves as well as upon the children; all are capable and the quality of some exceeds competence. The virtue of this school is hard work, and in the basic subjects the abler children make commendable, and the less able children, useful progress. The beginning of a reference library seems to indicate that the teachers wish to give the children greater responsibility for finding out things for themselves.

