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REPORT

ON THE INSPECTION OF
SOUTHGATE COUNTY SCHOOL.

DATE: February 1909.

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

BOARD TO PROMOTE THE EXTENSION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING

R E P O R T OF THE BOARD
ON THE EDUCATIONAL WORK
OF THE
SOUTHGATE COUNTY SCHOOL

February, 1909.

Inspectors

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The Board have the honour to submit the following Report based upon the Reports of their Inspectors on the Educational Work of the Southgate County School.

The Southgate County School was opened in May 1907, temporary accommodation being provided in Broomfield House, a private mansion standing in Broomfield Park which was recently acquired for the use of the public. At first it was thought sufficient to arrange for 75 pupils, but it has been found necessary to utilise additional rooms owing to the rapid increase in numbers. Palmer's Green and Southgate are being developed a great deal and houses with rents of from 240 to 255 are springing up on all sides. About half the pupils come from elementary schools, and almost all the rest from more or less unsatisfactory private schools. When the school was opened there were 38 pupils; in less than two years the numbers have risen to 142. This serves to show how much the district stood in need of a good secondary school for boys; it also suggests the serious difficulties presented by the organisation of the teaching and by the classification of the pupils.

These difficulties have been increased by the accommodation. The decision to use temporary premises rather than to postpone the opening of the school was fully justified; there was no other building available than Broomfield House; and all that is possible has been done to render this private house

convenient for the purposes of a school. It is hoped that within a short time a suitable building with 300 places will be available; an excellent site has been secured for it. It would serve no useful purpose to dwell on the shortcomings of the temporary quarters of the school; but in estimating the work done it is worthy of consideration that there is no assembly room, that the science laboratory was formerly a kitchen, and that access to the upper floor is ordinarily by a narrow staircase and a winding passage.

The following table gives the number of boys in each Form, their average age, and the amount of time per week given to work in class and at home:

Form	No. of Pupils.	Average Age	Classwork	Homework.
Up.V.	12	14y. 9m.	26h.	11h.
Low.V.	18	14y. 3m.	26h.	11h.
Up.IV.	29	13y. 8m.	26h.	7h.
L.IV.A.	30	13y. 3m.	26h.	7h.
L.IV.B.	31	12y. 9m.	26h.	7h.
III.	22	12y.	26h.	6h.
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The two sections of Form V are generally taught together, but are separated for French. Together with Upper IV they form a block for the alternative subjects of Latin and German. The general standard of these Forms is that of the second year's course of the Board of Education.

The two sections of Lower IV form a block for French, and also for Latin and German. The A section consists largely of boys who have passed through the seventh standard of an elementary school.

Eleven hours' preparation per week is a little high for boys under 15.

The day is divided into periods as follows:

Morning 9.15 to 10, 10 to 10.45, 11-11.45, 11.45-12.30.

Afternoon (not on Wednesdays and Saturdays) 2 to 2.45, 2.45 to 3.30, 3.30 to 4.

On the whole this is a satisfactory arrangement; but where classes reach 30, it is well to have a recognised break of five minutes between periods, so that the rooms may be properly flushed with air.

In a young and rapidly growing school the curriculum presents problems which do not arise when the school is properly developed in all its parts, when boys are only admitted into the lowest Forms, and when a certain standard of attainment can be insisted upon for admission.

Much effort has to be devoted to ensuring a good command of the mother tongue, and it is prudent not to make the linguistic programme too ambitious. The time devoted to English in the present timetable cannot be deemed adequate for the purpose of making up for the poor grounding which most pupils appear to have had before admission. At least one more period per week is required in Forms V and Upper IV, and at least two more in Forms Lower IV A and B and III. On the other hand the second foreign language (Latin or German), which is at present begun in Lower IV should be postponed at least until Upper IV, and an additional

period should then be allotted to it. At present many boys in Lower IV are starting two foreign languages at once, which is now generally regarded as a mistake. This postponement of the second foreign language ^(German) will allow of two additional periods for English and one for Arithmetic in Lower IV. In Form III one of the Arithmetic periods and one of the Scripture periods can be allotted to English.

An addition to the time allowed for drill would be of undoubted benefit to the boys; particular attention should be devoted to breathing exercises.

In the following sections the Inspectors record their impressions of the teaching in the chief subjects of the curriculum; detailed criticism is reserved for the Appendix to this Report.

The general scheme for English has on the whole been planned on satisfactory lines, and the teaching is for the most part in able hands, but in the present circumstances of the school the time devoted to the subject, especially in the lower Forms, is quite inadequate. A large proportion of the boys enter the school with insufficient preparation, being unable to read, or even to speak, with accuracy, freedom, and clearness, and until these fundamental defects are remedied no good progress can be made in the study either of English or of any other subject. It is not only that faults of accent and pronunciation have to be corrected; attention to these is greatly needed, but their improvement is a matter of time.

What is imperatively required at the outset of the course is abundant opportunities for practice in reading aloud, in recitation, and in other forms of oral expression, and for this purpose it is strongly recommended that in the lowest Forms two more periods a week should be secured for English subjects. More concentration on these preliminaries during the first year would greatly improve the situation for the remainder of the course, but in any case the time is too meagre in every Form. There is too little opportunity for recitation, composition, and for the reading of authors. The present courses of reading have on the whole been judiciously chosen, but considering the inadequate preparation of the majority of the boys it would seem that in one or two cases the works proposed are of rather too advanced a character. Grammar and analysis seem to be soundly taught.

Those who are engaged in the teaching of History strive to make the best of the conditions, and their efforts meet with very considerable success, but they are hampered by the character of the textbooks. Except in the lowest Form these are of a dry and uninteresting nature; they are mere compendia out of which all the life has been squeezed, and when put into the hands of young learners they can hardly have any other effect than to give them a distaste for the subject. The teachers wisely take every occasion to go beyond the limits of the textbook, but if the scheme adopted gave them greater freedom in the choice of material and treatment the results would be much more satisfactory. While at the top of the school the consecutive

and detailed study of a special period would be quite appropriate, it would be desirable in the preceding years to make no pretension to any systematic or exhaustive treatment, but to extend the range so as to include the study of characters and episodes from all times and countries according to their natural appeal to the intelligence and interest of the boys at each particular stage of their advancement. The study should be made as far as possible biographical, and there should be no scruple in excluding any topics which, however important, are not suited to the immediate purpose. Textbooks are now to be had which emphasise the picturesque features of history and have thus the immense advantage of attracting youthful learners to the study.

It must be said at the outset that the conditions under which the instruction in Geography is given at present in no way resemble the arrangements the Headmaster hopes to make when the greater accommodation of the new buildings is available and additions have been made to the staff. At present the larger part of the teaching is given by a master who makes no pretence of having specialised in this subject. Within this limitation his teaching is effective and calculated to assist the development of the intelligence of the pupils. A fair amount of time is devoted to the subject and good modern textbooks are in use. The school possesses excellent modern orographical wall-maps and good use is made of them. The master is specially successful in framing questions which encourage

intelligent thought and raise considerations designed to lead to discussions which assist the boys to reason from cause to effect. It may be said with confidence that when the Headmaster is in a position to secure, as he hopes to be able to do, the services of a specialist teacher of Geography, to furnish a room suitable for the performance of practical exercises by the boys themselves, and to introduce something in the way of outdoor observation and measurement, ~~that~~ the standard reached in Geography will soon be high and the progress made rapid and real.

The teaching of French is in the hands of two specialists, both of whom have spent some time in France; the senior teacher is especially qualified for the work. The task of teaching two foreign languages to boys who have had practically no linguistic training of any kind is by no means easy, and the large size of the classes, their lack of homogeneity*, and the long hours of teaching render the work very arduous. The standard attained is naturally not high. The older pupils are acquiring some power of expressing themselves in French, and seem to follow the spoken language with very fair success.

The same remarks apply to German, except that here the standard is still lower; this again is quite natural. The desirability of postponing this language has been mentioned above.

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In one set of Lower IV, 4 boys were new this term, 5 were in their 2nd term, 4 in their 3rd, 5 in their 4th, 2 in their 5th, and 4 in their 6th. In Form III 9 boys were new this term, 7 were in their 2nd term, 2 in their 3rd, 1 in his 4th, and 1 in his 6th.

The study of Latin is carried on under very serious difficulties, and in spite of the capable teaching, which offers a true intellectual discipline, it is very doubtful whether the results obtained would ever, under the present circumstances, justify the place which the subject holds in the curriculum. Even if the boys all entered the school at the age of twelve and proceeded regularly through the course, their inadequate preparation would make it inadvisable to start them in a second foreign language in their second year. As it is, while pupils are joining the school at all ages, no progressive course is possible. Beginners have to be admitted into every Set, sometimes even in the middle of the school year, and this necessity brings constant hindrances to the general rate of advance. More concentrated study at a riper age, when interruptions from new entrants would be less frequent, would certainly afford a more profitable use of the time.

The teaching of Mathematics is given under the direct supervision of the Headmaster, who in addition to possessing high mathematical qualifications has had a long and varied experience in teaching these subjects. The work throughout is thoroughly effective. With an occasional exception only, the classes in Mathematics are characterised by the bright alertness of the boys and the painstaking earnestness of the masters. The active interest and co-operation of the boys are well maintained throughout the periods.

Ample time is devoted to this branch of the curriculum;

good, modern textbooks are in use; steady progress is being made; and there should be in the near future a high standard of attainment.

In both divisions of Form V, which is at present the highest class of the school, Trigonometry and Mensuration are taught in addition to Arithmetic, Algebra and Geometry. A special word of praise is due to the successful practical outdoor work in Trigonometry which has been introduced in these classes. In Form Upper IV the same subjects, with the exception of Trigonometry, are taken up. Both divisions of Form Lower IV study Arithmetic, Geometry and Algebra and in Form III attention is confined to Arithmetic and Geometry. The work is graduated skilfully and especial care is taken to make the lessons a means of developing the boys' intelligence and initiative.

The careful manner in which homework exercises are revised in class and the judicious recapitulation introduced periodically call for commendation.

Science is studied in all Forms. Physics and Chemistry are taken in both divisions of Form V; Physics alone in all sections of Form IV, and Nature Study in Form III. An adequate amount of time is given to the subject and the teaching is shared between the Headmaster and a Cambridge graduate.

Nearly all the weaknesses of the instruction are traceable to the temporary character of the accommodation. The want of room, the inadequacy of the equipment due to insufficient storage room, the absence of a teacher's demonstration

tsble and other temporary disabilities make the teaching very arduous and militate against efficiency. Notwithstanding these many difficulties much good work is being accomplished. If it were not for the very inadequate previous preparation of many of the boys, much greater progress would have been made. The enthusiasm and ability of the Headmaster and his assistant in this work, and the Headmaster's skill in designing ingenious pieces of apparatus, led the Inspector to the conclusion that when the new buildings are available good progress will be made.

The work in Nature Study in Form III is hardly satisfactory. It appears to be inspired by the wrong ideal and is in need of careful readjustment.

The teaching of Art has recently been entrusted to a competent teacher who has drawn up a suitable scheme of work. Good progress is being made, but the very small supply of models is felt as a hindrance. Some of the work seen was full of promise.

The Staff are generally well chosen, and do their work to the best of their ability, which in most cases is very good. The hours of teaching are, however, very heavy, and an early addition to the staff is essential. It is impossible to work a school of 140 efficiently with the proportion of masters to boys that would be adequate in a school of 300. The Headmaster is at present teaching 20 hours a week; it is doubtful whether in a young school where the organisation is very difficult the

headmaster should be expected to teach more than half that time.

The Pupils make a favourable impression. They are keen to work and respond energetically to the efforts of their masters. They are in many cases severely handicapped by their previous schooling; this is particularly noticeable in their articulation and a certain awkwardness in expressing themselves.

Valuable attempts are being made to stimulate a sense of corporate life; with this end in view the boys have been divided into four Houses. Due attention is given to games, but much remains to be done in the way of physical instruction. The absence of a gymnasium, of apparatus and of a covered playground is inevitable; but it is a great disadvantage.

There is as yet no medical inspection, and not even a systematic testing of the eyesight and hearing.

The taste for private reading has been stimulated by the institution of Form libraries, to which the pupils themselves lend books for the use of their school-fellows. The proportion of books of adventure possessing slight literary value is consequently rather large, and it might be well both to exercise control over the books accepted for this purpose and to set aside some money for providing good books of travel and biography, and interesting illustrated French and German books.

Discipline is preserved without friction. The arrangements for recording and reporting on progress appear satisfactory, although it may be suggested that two reports in the term would

suffice; at present fortnightly reports have to be prepared, which adds considerably to the work of the staff. The system of rewards and punishments also seems suitable.

Considering the difficulties to which reference has been made, the work of the school deserves praise. Great credit is due to the Headmaster who is unsparing in his efforts to increase its efficiency. The Inspectors are confident that the Southgate County School has started on a career of great and increasing usefulness.

R. D. ROBERTS,

Registrar of the Board to promote
the Extension of University
Teaching.

N O T E

The Reports on the Inspection or Examination of Schools issued by the Board for the Extension of University Teaching include:-

(1) A general report, which if published must be printed in extenso and without comment; and

(2) An appendix, which is not intended for publication, but contains detailed criticisms and suggestions not inserted in the general report, and is a confidential communication for the particular use of the Principal and, if deemed desirable, of the Staff.

A P P E N D I X

English. The lesson heard in Form V upon Henry V was well conducted, useful exercises in paraphrasing being frequently proposed. Some of the reading aloud was fairly good, but more time is needed for practise in elocution. It would be better if the boys stood up when they were reading, and any mistakes they make should be corrected at once. On ordinary occasions it would be better if each boy only read a few lines, so that as many as possible might get a change. Occasionally, however, they should be asked to read a scene in character. For this, and for the recitation of chosen passages, there seems to be hardly any time available. It is the same unfortunately with written compositions, which are almost in abeyance during the present term. Practice in elocution and in composition ought to go on throughout the year in every Form.

The lesson on Julius Caesar in Form Upper IV was also turned to good account for paraphrasing and criticism of the characters. In reading aloud from the play some of the boys were apt to stumble and make mistakes, and not many attempted to introduce any expression, but some skill was shown in paraphrasing. The boys were evidently interested in the play, but it is doubtful whether Shakespeare forms the most suitable reading at the age of thirteen when so little previous reading has been accomplished. The boys had not learned anything by heart from the play, and their compositions had recently been very infrequent. It is clear that here also too little time is available for a thorough and comprehensive course of English study.

In Lower IVA the reading aloud from Scott's "Lady of the Lake" was not well done, most of the boys not being even fluent, but intelligence was shown in putting the words of the poem in prose order and in explaining difficult words and allusions. Several of the boys acquitted themselves well in exercises on the uses of words as different parts of speech. Here again there had been no time for recitation this term.

In Lower IVB more practice in elocution is very much needed. No recitation had been done this term, and a few who tried to remember passages from 'The Ancient Mariner' that they had learned last term were hurried, jerky, and expressionless in their utterance, and the prose reading of passages from Church's 'Stories from the Aeneid' was not very satisfactory. The analysis of a simple sentence written on the board was well done, and questions on the parts of speech were successfully answered by most, though a few made stupid replies.

In Form III the reading aloud showed the same faults, indeed very few could read a simple passage from Kingsley's 'Heroes' without stumbling and making rudimentary mistakes, while in recitation very few attempted a rendering that was anything but mechanical.

It would be better if in reciting the boys were made to take up a firm and free attitude. In reading and reciting, while it is well to include as many of the class as possible, the boys should not be stopped in the middle of a sentence. Tennyson's 'You ask me Why' and 'Morte d'Arthur' seemed rather beyond the grasp of the boys. It would be better to give them some of the simpler examples of our ballad literature. A few of the boys showed skill in making nouns from adjectives, and the shortening of sentences by leaving out the adjuncts, though it was evidently an unaccustomed exercise, met with fair success from several. It would be well to give abundant practice in this, as it forms the best introduction to analysis. Frequent composition exercises are wisely given to this Form; the subjects were well chosen and the essays carefully corrected.

History. In Forms V and Upper IV excellent lessons were heard. In the former the subject was the American War of Independence; in the latter, the social and political condition of England after the Napoleonic wars. The questioning was very well adapted to making the boys think and arousing their interest, and the different points in the situation were effectively brought out. At the suggestion of the Inspector several of the boys were asked to give a connected account of some particular episode or movement. There was no lack of volunteers for this task, and those who were called upon acquitted themselves decidedly well on the whole. In Lower IVA a good lesson was heard on the reign of Henry VII, attention being called to the more interesting features. In Lower IVB the influence of the unsuitable textbook seemed to interfere with the success of the lesson. The treatment of the Renaissance was too advanced for this stage. The boys were quite ready to reproduce some of the stories they had previously heard, but the attempts on the whole were not very successful. One boy gave a good account of the Peasants' Revolt. They should have abundant practice in oral composition of this kind. In Form III the textbook in use is well adapted to its purpose and the lessons can be made thoroughly interesting. Fairly good attempts were made by several of the boys to reproduce the stories they had been reading.

Geography. One of the most notable weaknesses in the teaching at present is that during the lessons the boys have too little to do. Passive listening soon degenerates into well-conducted inattention. More use should be made, even in present circumstances, of map drawing of a sensible kind, the construction of sections, the plotting of meteorological and commercial data, and any other expedients which ensure the active employment of the boys.

In map drawing simplicity should be the aim. A simple sketch-map designed to illustrate some specific point is far

more valuable than a pretentious reproduction of one of the maps from the atlas.

There is, also, too great a disposition to emphasise details and to lose sight of broad fundamental principles. More prominence might with advantage be given to the description and explanation of the natural phenomena dealt with in physical geography.

A tendency to make the schemes of work for the various Forms too comprehensive and over-ambitious should be checked.

Modern Languages. The methods in use, especially in the case of the junior specialist, are capable of improvement. The articulation of the boys, even in English, is often very unsatisfactory; and the introduction of systematic phonetic teaching in the mother tongue as well as in foreign languages would be attended by valuable results. The German pronunciation is generally less good than the French, although it is easier for English children. This is no doubt due to the fact that the teachers are better acquainted with French than with German. Without regular drill with a sound chart it is difficult to ensure that the foreign vowels shall be correctly produced. The pronunciation of long a and o, of the lip-rounded vowels, of l and r require particular care. The difficulties they present are formidable, but by no means insurmountable.

In answering questions, the pupils in the early stages should always give complete sentences; and they should be encouraged to speak fluently, not in the faltering way which is at present too common.

In the conduct of the lesson it is important to introduce the foreign language as much as possible. At present there is too much unnecessary translation, and class-phrases are given in English when they might with advantage be given in French.

New material should be presented to beginners with great care, and it is a mistake in method to devote only the last ten minutes of a lesson to what is new. The new words and phrases should be connected with what has already been learnt, the pupils should be led to find out for themselves what they mean, and there would then be no need for the pupils to write down the new words with their English equivalents. The homework should consist of exercises based on the new material thus gained.

In the second stage also the homework should not require the help of dictionaries and vocabularies. The difficult new words should be supplied before hand by the teacher, or the pupils should be encouraged to find an approximately correct rendering from the context.

The practice of translating in chorus cannot be commended, but for other purposes the chorus work might be extended with advantage. In the teaching of grammar, great care should be taken to let the boys deduce new rules from a plentiful supply of suitable examples.

Some means should be found of suspending the wall pictures without covering the blackboard. The fact that the blackboard was covered in this way probably explains why insufficient use was made of it. It is important that the oral work should be supplemented by frequent appeals to the eye; otherwise there is serious danger that the spelling may be neglected.

The corrections of German exercises by the junior specialist seemed in some cases to have been hurried, as a number of mistakes were left uncorrected. An excuse for this may be found in the long hours of teaching; but it is certainly desirable that he should extend his knowledge of German if he is to continue teaching the subject.

The work of the senior specialist was generally of very good quality; but there were indications that the very arduous work was telling on him.

The use in some of the German classes of so old-fashioned a book as Otto's cannot be commended; the very unsatisfactory order in which in declining the cases are given (Nom. Gen. Dat. Acc.) is evidently due to the use of this grammar. It is not desirable to use at the same time books of which the methods are quite incompatible.

Latin. The two sets of the Upper Block have to be taught together, though they are doing separate work. The three boys who form the upper section have been studying the subject for two or three years and are fairly well advanced, considering that they can get little attention. Of the twenty-two boys who form the lower section, about half have been less than a year at Latin and the remainder about two years. With only two periods a week no great progress could be expected, and many of them are still very uncertain in their recidence, but the teaching follows a good method and seems to make the best of the situation. The restored pronunciation has been adopted but is not always consistently followed. Care is especially needed in the pronunciation of the u. The quantities of the vowels were not always rightly given. Some of the boys were fairly skilful in turning Latin sentences about, altering singular to plural, present to past etc., and some good answers were given to questions proposed by the Inspector on grammatical differences between English and Latin. In the Lower Block all had begun in September except one boy who entered in January. The teaching follows the same lines and the boys have made as much progress as could be expected where such a limited amount of time is devoted to the subject.

Mathematics. Though it is easily possible to make a fetish of neatness in mathematical work, there is a great

danger when too little attention is given to it, that untidy, careless and ill-arranged work may become reflected in slovenly and inaccurate thinking. Some of the homework exercises of Form V left a great deal to be desired in this direction; the written work was in some cases untidily done in pencil and was also ill-arranged; the work in Arithmetic of Form III, again, though done in ink, was too often slovenly and crude. In this connexion it is well worth earnest consideration as to whether it would not be better in the upper classes to substitute exercise books for the present plan of working on separate sheets of paper. Boys are apt to regard work which is to be destroyed immediately as unimportant and not worth taking pains over.

The drawing exercises in Geometry in the lower Forms and the graphical work in higher classes would be improved greatly by the regular use of harder pencils.

A disposition in some classes to emphasise mistakes made by weaker boys by drawing the attention of the class to them and repeating them on the blackboard should be checked. Prominence is best given only to correct solutions, since many boys possess little discrimination and are likely to remember the mistake rather than the master's correction.

More use might be made in Forms Lower IVB and III of concrete examples and practical work in teaching Arithmetic and in these classes, too, an attempt should be made as new rules are mastered of generalising the process and in this way introducing algebraic modes of expression.

More time and attention should be given to Mental Arithmetic in Forms Lower IVB and III.

Science. An over-anxiety to secure progress has led to too rapid work in the divisions of Lower IV. Most of the work should be revised slowly and carefully. At present simple fundamental ideas have been insufficiently comprehended and the ignorance exhibited by the weaker boys was a little distressing.

Insufficient importance appears to have been attached to developing the power of clear, precise oral expression. Unless a boy is able to state in simple, correct language what he has done and the object in view, he is not reaping the full advantage of his experimental work.

There is a danger in the practical work that the initiative of the boys will remain undeveloped if they perform each step of a practical demonstration in unison under the immediate guidance of their instructor. When possible, boys should be left more to rely upon their own resources.

At present the work in Form III in Nature Study is of little scientific value. This work ought consistently to be observational and designed to develop an open-eyed interest in Nature. The lesson heard by the Inspector was purely informational and the boys copied down facts written on the board

by the master. Instead of basing his lesson upon specimens in the hands of his pupils, the master did without actual plants and gave a theoretical lesson on the functions of the root. A few questions by the Inspector showed that the boys had little or no power of observation. One boy had no idea of what a sunflower was like; another thought apples grew at the ends of branches of the apple tree and so on. Unless the Nature Study lessons become opportunities for observing, describing, and sketching natural objects and of becoming acquainted with the processes of Nature, they are of little value and might with advantage be discontinued.