

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Report by H.M. Inspectors

on

ST. PETER'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

GREENWICH, LONDON

Inspected on

14th, 19th and 25th March 1963

NOTES

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

This voluntary aided school was built just over a hundred years ago within a stone's throw of the Royal Naval College. Originally it served the parish of St. Peter's but the church, which stood next to the school, was destroyed during the war and the parish is now amalgamated with that of St. Alfege. The immediate neighbourhood has suffered a good deal of deterioration, and much demolition and road widening is scheduled.

The main building contains seven classrooms, one of which is used as a small library. In addition, the school uses the old church hall and an attached room. The general effect is dark and depressing, created by high windows through which children cannot see and through which light finds grudging entrance, and by a garish colour scheme which, mercifully, is due for attention next year. At the time of the inspection there were more than twenty broken window panes, some of them obscured by cardboard. Other difficulties are the number of inter-connecting classrooms, quite inadequate cloakroom arrangements and a shortage of storage space.

Considerable efforts have been made by the Local Authority and the Managers in recent years to carry out such improvements as the restricted building allows. Thus, floors have been renovated, new basins and hot water installed, better toilet facilities provided for the staff, and a playground wall built. In fact, the limit of amelioration has, in many respects, now been reached and the Managers can look only to adequate support by the Diocesan Authority and to an early place in a building programme for the major improvements the school needs. It is understood that land very near the school could be negotiated for, and urgent action to secure it would appear advisable.

The staff are to be commended for the cheerfulness with which they work in adverse conditions and for the efforts many of them make to brighten their rooms with attractive wall displays and teaching aids. The Headmaster was appointed in 1959 and has brought to his work deep sincerity of purpose and concern for children. He has kept abreast of current thought on primary education and has done a great deal to encourage experiment and variety of approach, though these efforts have not always met with the response they deserved. Staff changes in the lower part of the school have been frequent and, unfortunately, more are imminent.

The 248 juniors and infants are divided into seven classes. A number of children are noticeably poorly dressed and it is significant that some 110 are receiving free midday meals. They are, nevertheless, cheerful and friendly in school, responding eagerly to whatever opportunity is offered them for lively work and physical activity. A number of local visits and expeditions have enriched their classroom experience.

There is a good team of teachers in the infant and lower junior classes, and much of their work is full of promise. The interesting English written in many of the children's stories and diaries could well be extended to other subjects of the curriculum, including history, geography, and nature study.

At the top of the school the picture is less satisfactory. In Class I some controlled art and accurate model making is achieved, but the general written work is thin and is often inadequately checked. Though the school library is in the next room, little use seems to be made of it. The work could be livelier and more varied if it were frankly acknowledged that only two or three children in the class are likely to qualify for an academic secondary education. Some, in fact, still need a good deal of patient help with the elements of reading.

In Class 2, taught by the Deputy Head, there is a good deal of sound work, including a fair amount of well-supervised composition, sometimes written at length. This originality is, however, not found in such subjects as history and geography. There is a useful classroom collection of books, but, again, little use is found for the central library.

A selected group of backward children is taught each morning by a part-time master. While such help is valuable, it was suggested that its benefits were minimised by having the same fixed group every day. Not only are the children consistently missing other valuable sections of the normal time-table, but there are many others in need of assistance. Some special equipment for this type of work would appear desirable. Among other matters discussed with the Headmaster were the need for a stimulating literature scheme and the advisability, in view of the present lack of use of the central library, of dispersing most of the books round the classrooms.

When he took up his appointment the Headmaster had four main objectives - to secure improvements in the building and its amenities; to develop^a/secure, friendly atmosphere; to build up a settled, competent staff; and to raise the all-round standards of work. It is gratifying that such substantial success has been achieved with the first two of these. The third is not yet clearly in sight. Some sections of the school have gone a long way to realising the fourth aim, and it is only to be regretted that impermanence of staffing makes continuing progress precarious.

There is good heart in this school. With its thoughtful Head, its active and clear-sighted body of Managers, and the natural liveliness of its children, it needs and merits prompt planning for the future.

St. Peter's Church of England School, Greenwich. No. 3577.

Number of pupils on roll, January 18th, 1963.

	Age								
	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Class 1							18	9	27
2					1	20	10		31
3				1	36				37
4			4	29	2				35
5		2	31	4					37
6		18	12						30
7	12	18							30
Total	12	38	47	34	39	20	28	9	227