

From time to time the question has been raised of the effect upon a school of losing its twelve, thirteen-, and fourteen-year-old pupils. Teachers to whom I mentioned the point expressed their conviction that the removal of the seniors led to earlier development among the younger pupils of the appreciation of leadership and responsibility.

Our own junior division, represented by Standards 1, 2, 3, and 4, is, in my opinion, being taught generally on right, modern lines, and my only suggestions are in the direction of developing art and handicrafts still further, and of giving the children a better appreciation of literature and music.

#### NURSERY SCHOOLS, KINDERGARTEN AND INFANT SCHOOLS.

In 1934 *England and Wales* had fifty-nine nursery schools, thirty-three under the control of local education authorities and twenty-six under non local education authorities. In these schools there were 4,446 pupils on the roll.

The *London County Council* has three "maintained" nursery schools with (in 1933-34) 425 pupils, and twelve "aided" with 471 pupils. Children may attend when they are 2 years of age; they leave at 5. The Council states that the main aim of the nursery school is to cultivate good habits which foster a love of wholesome food and healthy exercise and induce an alert and receptive attitude of mind. It is more of a home than a school: a preparation for school rather than a school itself.

I saw the famous Rachel McMillan Nursery School at Deptford, which has its own training college. The school is now under the control of the London County Council, and the training college receives "aid" from the Council. The district is a very poor one, and the children are taken into the school at 2 years of age and retained till they are 5, when they go to the infant-schools in the neighbourhood. The children are received at the school from 7 a.m. and kept there till 5.30 p.m., while their mothers are at work. They are given three meals a day, are bathed and cared for, and receive medical attention when necessary.

*Nottingham City* has nursery classes attached to its infant schools or classes.

"On the 31st July, 1934, there were twenty-one nursery schools in Scotland with a total enrolment of 689, and five ordinary schools containing nursery classes with a roll of 135. Two of the twenty-one nursery schools, one in Edinburgh and one in Glasgow, are provided by the respective education authorities; one is conducted by the Edinburgh Provincial Committee for the Training of Teachers, and the remaining eighteen, of which ten are situated in Edinburgh, three in Glasgow, and one each in Aberdeen, Dundee, Elgin, Paisley, and Stranraer, are conducted under voluntary management. Twelve of the eighteen nursery schools under voluntary management were aided by contributions from the education authorities. Of the five ordinary schools containing nursery classes, three are situated in Glasgow and two in Renfrewshire (Greenock and Paisley). In Glasgow there are eight other centres at which a few children of nursery-school age receive attention."

—*Report of Scottish Education Department, 1934-35.*

Kindergarten schools do not appear to form part of the education system in England or Scotland, nor did I hear of any similar schools in Denmark.

In *Australia* kindergartens are found in all of the cities. In some cases they form part of the State system, but, generally speaking, they are conducted by voluntary organizations, which in some States receive grants from the public funds.

In *Toronto* and *San Francisco* the kindergarten forms part of the school system. In San Francisco children are not admitted to the kindergarten till they are 4 years and 9 months old. The lower limit of compulsory attendance at elementary schools is 5 years and 9 months.

I am of the opinion that nursery schools are unnecessary in New Zealand, and that the State should not establish kindergartens as part of the national system. The kindergarten schools established by voluntary organizations have functioned successfully, and should receive financial assistance in accordance with the existing regulations. The co-operation of the Health Department and the Education Department in the oversight of the physical and mental well-being of children of pre-school age is worthy of serious consideration.

Abroad, infant schools and departments form a clearly defined part of the system. In England they are usually separate schools under the control of a headmistress; in Scotland they are in charge of an infant-mistress, sometimes called headmistress, who is under the direction of the head teacher of the whole school—that is, of the pupils up to 12 years of age. In Denmark the infants form a department of the school. It is usual for the pupils to be out of the infant school or department by the time they are 8 years of age in order that they may complete the next stage (the junior school) by the time they are 11 or 12 years of age.

The work done in arithmetic in some of the infant classes in other countries seems to me to be unduly difficult for the age of the pupils, and certainly in advance of what is done in New Zealand. Personally I cannot see that any useful purpose is served by requiring a large amount of formal number work from children under 8 years of age, and I have no wish to see our infant-school syllabus in arithmetic more extensive or more difficult than it is at present.

Young pupils, especially in England and Scotland, have access to more reading matter than our infants have, with the result that they enter the junior school having read a large number of easy story books. Handwork forms a large part of a pupil's education from the day he enters school, and by the time he is 8 years of age he has reached quite a high standard of attainment in drawing, painting, paper-cutting, toy-making, modelling, and weaving. Singing, physical exercises and dancing, dramatics, and recitation are usually very well done, and on the whole better than in New Zealand.