

REPORT BY HM INSPECTORS

on

KIRKDALE SCHOOL

ISSUED
17 JUN 1974

SYDENHAM, INNER LONDON

INSPECTED 28 TO 30 JANUARY 1974

NOTES

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1. Kirkdale School, Sydenham was opened in its present premises in 1965.
2. The school is run as a limited company and is registered as a friendly society.
3. The Board of Directors consists of 8 members, most of whom are parents or members of Staff. The former Principal and Co-founder acts as Secretary.
4. The school with 47 pupils of ages 3 to 10 occupies premises at 186 Kirkdale, Sydenham, SE26, on a site of approximately half an acre. The school accommodation is contained partly on the ground and first floors of a detached house and partly in a temporary wooden hut. At the front and rear of the buildings are play areas.

The ground floor provides a kitchen, dining-room/hall, cloakroom and classroom accommodation for the youngest group known as "The Bees" and for the middle group known as "The Wasps". Each of these classrooms has an easy means of access to the outside. The wooden hut accommodates the older pupils; their class is known as "The Hornets". Each room is subdivided into areas for specific activities. Each room has a sink and water supply.

On the first floor are the music room, office and staff lavatory.

The dimensions of the rooms and details of the sanitary fitments are given in the Appendix.

None of the classrooms is overcrowded but the numbers using the "Bees" and "Wasps" room should not be allowed to exceed the present totals.

The Fire Officer has visited the school and his recommendations are under consideration.

5. The artificial lighting in classrooms is adequate although a few light bulbs are missing.

6. The heating of the classrooms is by means of gas fires, wall-mounted electric fan-heaters and, in the case of the "Hornets" room, by an electrically heated hot-air system.

The heating, during this inspection, appeared to be satisfactory.

7. The floor coverings range from polished boards to linoleum or carpet. The linoleum in several places is cracked and worn away.

8. The state of the interior decoration varies. In parts of the building re-decoration has taken place recently. In other areas, such as the hall, staircase and "Bees" room, the paintwork is chipped and dirty. In some rooms ceilings have been repaired but not painted, and in several places, the skirting boards have rotted away and have not been replaced.

9. The number of WCs may be considered adequate. Each compartment is screened by a curtain of stiff fabric which provides sufficient privacy. There appears to be a shortage of lavatory paper.

The wash-basins, similar in number, are provided with cold water only.

Parents are expected to provide hand towels; the system, however, does not operate satisfactorily and the general standard of hygiene is low.

10. Hat and coat pegs are provided in the cloakroom, entrance hall and in some classrooms. The total number was not sufficient for the number of pupils on the roll.

11. The general state of the cleanliness of the floors, walls, shelves and cupboards is not satisfactory.

12. The exterior of the main building needs considerable attention. Several drains are blocked. The paintwork, in many parts, and particularly at the rear, is bare. A few slates have been dislodged from the roof. The wooden hut, also, needs painting.

13. The area at the front of the house was a lawn; it is now a muddy slope. At the rear there is an adventure playground with a generous amount of equipment.

A small part, only, of the area surrounding the house is hard-surfaced. This is unfortunate and is, without doubt, a factor contributing to the unsatisfactory cleanliness mentioned in paragraph 11.

14. The furniture provided is satisfactory.

15. The equipment provided for teaching purposes is satisfactory.

16. Few text books are used. There are sufficient books and materials for the reading scheme in use. Library books throughout the school are sufficient.

17. There is a lack of orderliness in the storage of much of the material and equipment.

This detracts from the appearance of the classroom and does not invite the desirable care of equipment or economy in the use of material.

18. The distribution of pupils by age is:-

Age	Boys	Girls	
		(including 2 P/T)	
3	3	1	1
4	1	4	7
5	4		3
6	6		-
7	4		1
8	3		2
9	4		-
10	4		-
11	-		-
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	29		18

TOTAL: 47

19. Satisfactory class attendance and admission registers are maintained.

20. The school meets daily from 09 15 to 12 30 and from 14 00 to 15 30.

21. The fees range from £45 a term for pupils aged 3½ years rising by termly increments of £3 - £5 to £99 at 11 years. Extra charges are made for swimming, cookery and for educational journeys. A mid-day meal is available at 12½p a day.

22. The teaching staff consists of 4 full-time and 5 part-time teachers. The full-time equivalent of the part-time teachers is 2.75. Three of the full-time and one of the part-time teachers are qualified.

23. The conduct of the school is discussed by parents and Staff at a meeting held twice or more times a term. The teaching staff meet separately each term and from their numbers elect one to take charge.

24. The teachers do not work from any written guide lines. A duplicated sheet entitled "Information for Visitors" explains briefly the general organisation of the school. The arrangement of the pupils in 3 groups is described. It also states, "Children, in the main, decide when to move from one group to the next. They also visit other groups and mix freely in the garden".

No pressure, therefore, is put on the pupils at any time to participate in any activities and they are free to leave any activity whenever they wish. As a result, at any time of the day, pupils may be seen busily occupied, or apparently doing nothing, anywhere on the premises. The Staff appear to be wholly absorbed in their work and they know the children well.

The youngest children, who form the bulk of the school, work freely with the basic play and creative materials that are provided. Lack of space is the inhibiting factor in the development of some activities, but during the inspection they were, among other things and on an individual basis, observed painting, experimenting with water, making things with 'junk' material, modelling with dough, using construction toys and just playing outside. Conversation about activities is encouraged by the Staff and with a few children, who show interest, there is some specific number teaching with concrete apparatus and some reading instruction. Stories are used as starting points for wider discussion, similarly follow up is planned for television programmes. Always, however, the choice to participate is the children's responsibility. As they move into the "Wasps" group a similar range of activities with some additions, such as woodwork and cookery, continues and there is still no pressure to become involved. It is here that the staff need to be very skilful in encouraging those children who have been through the period of adjustment to the school situation to fully exert themselves in the various activities which are presented to them.

The older children have opportunities for the development of creative activities; some interesting modelling in wood and scrap material was seen. Cookery, dress-making, music and drama also have a place on the programme. Simple scientific experiments with batteries and magnets and daily observations of the weather are encouraged. Swimming is taught regularly and arrangements exist for other outdoor games. Excursions are organised to places of interest; during this inspection, plans were being made to visit a play in Central London.

Progress in the basic skills of reading and writing is sustained but on an informal basis. Little emphasis is placed by the Staff on regular practice, or on a sustained effort by the children. In writing and extended reading the children fail to show their full potential. Nevertheless, they reveal a developing sense of independence, a commendable zeal for discovery and a most welcome degree of oral fluency.

APPENDIX

APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS OF TEACHING SPACES

Main building - ground floor:-

"Bees" classroom - 289 square feet

"Wasps" classroom - 372 " "

Dining-room/hall - 289 " "

First floor:-

Music room - 80 square feet

Wooden building -

"Hornets" classroom - 600 " "

SANITARY FITMENTS

Cloakroom WC 4

Wash basins 4
(cold only)

1st floor landing WC 1

Wash basins 1