

## The Joint Four

Conference on "The Middle School", 1969

### THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

In order to meet the lively interest of its members in this new form of secondary reorganisation, the Joint Four chose "The Middle School" as the theme of an all-day Conference held on Saturday, 15th February, 1969, in the Botany Lecture Theatre at University College, University of London. Miss H. E. Vidal, Chairman of Joint Four, welcomed the Speakers and invited Sir Alec Clegg, Chief Education Officer for the West Riding of Yorkshire, to introduce the topic and tell the Conference some of the reasons why the West Riding had decided to adopt this form of secondary reorganisation.

#### **i. The Conception of the "Middle School" in Secondary Reorganisation in the West Riding**

**Sir Alec Clegg** said that he felt that his role was to give information about the beginning of the West Riding's scheme for "Middle Schools" from his own first-hand experience. He pointed out that the first comprehensive school in the West Riding had been planned by the Conservative Governing Body in Tadcaster, and was introduced reluctantly by the Labour Council of the West Riding, and by the Labour Government of the time. After this school had been established, the Education Committee had resolved to establish community schools, like the one at Tadcaster, throughout the Riding.

Once this fundamental decision was taken, the actual pattern of schools was dictated by economic rather than social reasons. Comprehensive schools, which were necessary to increase the proportion of trained adults by removing the 11+ barrier, could easily be introduced if means were available for building a new school. Difficulties arose when a new building could not be provided. The Committee examined the Leicestershire Plan, with its break at 14, which enabled the Authority to use its grammar schools for the older pupils and use the modern schools for the rest of the secondary pupils, but they had doubts about its educational advantages.

Fifteen experienced and successful teachers in the Riding, including heads of grammar and primary schools and principals of colleges of education, were approached during 1961/62 and asked where they would make the break in education if they could choose. Ten of them chose 13, giving strong reasons for their choice, and only one chose eleven; two chose 14, but most of them rejected 14 because it involved a two-year period before the 16+ examination which was thought to be too short. They were willing to consider a change at 12, but not at 11. One of the infant school heads pointed out the importance of allowing flexibility in the arrangements for starting school, and suggested that instead of admitting all five-year-olds to full-time schooling in the term of their fifth birthdays, some should be allowed to attend for half time until they reached the age of five and some should continue on a half-time basis even after the age of five if the head teacher thought it advisable.

However good the teaching, by no means all children can read at the normal transfer age of 7+ and it was thought that a move at this stage

was undesirable for those who had not become secure readers. These considerations led to the proposal that children should begin compulsory education in the term after their fifth birthday, and that there should be a period of voluntary part-time attendance for a year before reaching the compulsory age and for two terms after. This would be the reception period. Children would stay in the infant school until 8+ or 9+ until all but the mentally retarded had consolidated their

mastery of the 3 R's. By 9+ at the latest they would transfer to a middle school, which would continue the work of the primary school, but would gradually wean the child to a programme of limited specialisation in preparation for the programme of the secondary school where specialisation was a proper feature. This pace of change would not be too fast or too rigorous for the slower learners.

At 12+ to 13+ pupils would transfer to secondary schools, which would be larger in size and able to provide a rich range of differential courses.

In considering this plan there was concern about the size of the sixth form—a critical feature in the comprehensive school. Various questions were considered:—Are large comprehensive schools unwieldy, or is there virtue in size? Is it preferable to have one large 11-18 school or two smaller schools? Does the provision of laboratories and workshops in schools with some pupils of 11 and 12 years old tend to restrict their diet by making it too specialised?

Discussion of these and similar questions produced some interesting answers. Many teachers liked the idea of the middle school, which would be more like the best type of primary school than a grammar school. The danger in establishing these schools was that specialisation might be extended downwards to 9+. It was therefore suggested that there should be no specialist teaching, except in Music, during the first and second years, and that even in the third year the class teacher would spend one third of his time with his class. Differentiation into separate subjects would be limited. Separate sciences, for instance, would not be introduced, nor would there be formal class experiments. Laboratories would not be provided but there would be sinks and work benches under the windows in every room to allow space for individual experiments. The only subject in which an agreed syllabus seemed necessary was Mathematics.

There seemed little hope of introducing this scheme, which was against the existing law, until Sir Edward Boyle came to the West Riding and suggested the possibility of changing the regulation in the 1944 Act. This eventually led to the "1964 Act" which legalised the middle school.

At this time the Authority's attention was turned to the problems of reorganisation in the Hemsworth area, in which nothing had been changed since 1944. Officers from the Education Department saw every teacher individually to discuss possibilities and to assess the best way of using the qualified staff available. There was general anxiety about the possibility of losing the primary school approach for the nine and ten-year-old pupils, but it was recognised that limited specialisation should begin at 11+ occupying about half the time available for pupils of 12+. It was agreed that posts of responsibility should not be tied to precise subject areas but that, since the school would be run by teams of teachers each responsible

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for one year's work, the posts of responsibility should go to those in charge of each year. It was thought that a rigid and fixed timetable was inappropriate and that freedom should be given to teachers to arrange work as they thought fit, within the limits imposed by the need to share specialist facilities.

The concept of the middle school as we have seen it is, therefore, a simple one. It is to establish a school which can offer to children the opportunity of moving into all the major areas of educational experience at levels appropriate to their abilities, and to achieve this within the framework of a secure pattern of teacher-child relationships and in such a way that the need for a predictive timetable such as that which we now know in the majority of secondary schools is kept to a minimum so that it can be the judgment of the teacher about the value of a particular activity for a particular child at a given time which is the deciding factor in determining the rhythm of the child's day. It is not, therefore, a transition from the primary school to the secondary school which should govern the thinking about the middle school, but rather the search for ways in which the security and flexibility which we now know in the primary school to be such an important feature

of successful education can be combined with the enrichment of opportunity which a wider range of teachers and extended facilities can offer.

In each year the particular composition of a group of staff might vary in a number of ways, but together with the unattached members of staff it would be feasible for them to offer specialist guidance at an appropriate level over a very wide range of activities and experiences. As far as the children are concerned, this kind of organisation of staffing would mean that, in addition to their own class teacher, they would have the combined resources of a group of teachers available to them in a close and flexible situation when needed. It might be that for parts of the day, or parts of the week, the whole of a year group and a group of five or six members of staff could be considered as an entity, and there could be a mixing of staff and children with a wide range of facilities available to them of different kinds. These five or six staff could, between them, decide the priorities for a period of, say, two or three weeks and decide how they were to utilise their combined resources and regroup the children into groups of different sizes for different purposes. It would, of course, be necessary for each teacher working in this situation to know accurately what each child in his own class was working on, and to ensure that over a period of time each child is engaged in activities of different kinds, so that one area of learning is not being pursued at the expense of the others.

The range of activities would encourage children to improve their level of reading and their skill in counting and in oral communication, and would accustom them to use many materials and media in concrete activities involving mathematical and scientific as well as other skills. The approach would be exploratory, encouraging interest in the world around them. Though the children would be given a fair amount of responsibility for their own work, they would be dependent upon the teacher for the recognition of achievement and for security, stimulation and guidance. The teacher would help to develop interests and skills and happy relationships within and outside the classroom. During the middle school years pupils

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would move into all the major areas of educational experience with a gradual increase of specialisation each year. The middle school period would not be transitional, but would provide flexibility and an enrichment of opportunity in an atmosphere of security.

With this philosophy in mind, a brief was produced for the architect. A building for 480 pupils was required, with a hall of 1,875 square feet, a music room of 900 square feet, library of 320 square feet (to house 3,000 books), a quiet room for language learning, four classrooms for the first year and for the second year, each of 600 square feet, with a walk-in store, access to the outside, a sink and drainer, blackboard, bookshelves, power points, etc. In association with each group of four rooms there would be a shared area outside the classroom, with a sink and workshop facilities. Each room, would serve as a base for 30 pupils and would be designed for a variety of work to go on simultaneously—i.e. science, craft, reading, writing, mathematics etc. The teacher would be moving between pupils to give individual help. The shared areas would give additional space to spread out of the classroom to carry out practical activities. The furniture would be easily movable so that it could be used flexibly. The shared area would also allow for mixing between classes and would permit two or more teachers to combine in work with a larger group.

For the third- and fourth-year pupils the classrooms would be smaller (570 square feet) but the shared area larger (2,550 square feet). Some bays would be for " clean " crafts and others for " dirty " crafts such as clay modeling. A kiln would be provided and areas for Domestic Science and Science and a workshop. It would be possible for six teachers to use the shared space. Sir Alec reminded his audience that the first purpose-built middle school, designed on these lines, had started in September, 1968. Those who were using it were happy about the physical provisions. The head had seven probationers on his staff and though there had been many requests for visits to the school, these had been refused as it was necessary to allow time for everyone concerned to become established. A number of other middle schools were being organised in converted modern schools. After a year or two there would be evidence about their success and

the way in which they had developed. Already there were differences between them. Problems existed in the teaching of Modern Languages and Classics. Intensive in-service courses for Modern Language teaching had been organised for primary and middle school staff, but for the present Latin was confined to the upper schools.

## **2. Plans for Middle Schools and the Effect on the Classroom Situation. Mr. L. J.**

Burrows, H.M.I., said:—

The middle school has come to stay as an integral feature of our educational system. The figures given in the working paper of this Conference speak for themselves. In February, 1968, 29 local education authorities had received approval for establishing middle schools (eight involving an

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age range of 8-12, twenty with an age range of 9-13, and two with an age range, 10-13, one authority having a mixture of the two types). Since that date more approvals have been given in principle or in detail, but the situation substantially has not changed very much. Between now and the middle 1970s, however, we shall see these schools coming rapidly into operation. When one recalls that among the authorities who have received approval to establish 9-13 middle schools are such county boroughs as Kingston upon Hull, Bradford, Merton, and Wallasey, and such counties as Northumberland, Worcestershire, East Suffolk, and West Sussex, one realises that the stance of the ostrich towards them is no longer possible. Nor can those who work in other areas disregard the move towards middle schools; we are told that the population is becoming steadily more mobile, and we have responsibility in any school towards the many pupils who will move from one system to the other. The 9-13 school may therefore be expected to make a substantial impact upon our system. In other areas I am convinced that the 8-12 school, the case for which was convincingly argued in the Plowden Report, is bound to come.

Logically or not, there is in fact a considerable difference between schools serving these two age ranges. Both should benefit from the longer period allowed in the first school, where most pupils will gain in social confidence and in the mastery of the basic skills of learning. Both the 8-12 school and the 9-13 school will stand on firmer foundations than the 7-11 junior school, but there the resemblance between them may largely end. The 8-12 school will clearly have an essentially primary base; its approach to learning, the outlook of its staff, the kind of building designed to house it, all these are likely to reflect the concepts and practices which have grown up in the last generation in the best of our junior schools. Admittedly the final year will present some new problems, especially for teachers striving to meet the needs of the gifted children; but basically it will be an extension of the primary school. With the 9-13 school, however, it is no longer possible to take this view. In its lower years it must look, as it no doubt will towards good primary school practice, equally in the upper years of its age range it must take account of the lessons learned in our best secondary schools and of the rapid changes in character and in aptitudes which come upon many boys and girls in these years of adolescence. It must be a school in which the best of both primary and secondary traditions meet, and are blended to create a school which is no uneasy combination of these two, but which builds an identity of its own. The working paper for this Conference rightly asks a battery of questions about what life will be like in middle schools. No one can answer these with certainty but I shall offer a personal view.

### **Ages and Stages**

It is never pleasant to be jolted out of familiar routines, and most of us have worked for as long as we can remember in the framework of a system which was neatly divided at the age of 11. But there is nothing divinely ordained about this, and we all know that the reasons for selecting 11 are historical and administrative rather than educational. Are there in fact any ages at which transfer is easier and more natural than others ?

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Are there any stages of education which make a better unit than others ? For myself I doubt that there are; the more important factors seem to me to be the size of a school and the general compatibility of the age groups within it. The younger the children, the more bewildering large numbers can be; and the larger the school, the more difficult it is for the adults in it to maintain a real personal knowledge of each pupil. On compatibility, although it is clearly possible to run schools containing a very wide age range (the all-through village school of the past was often a very good community), nevertheless problems are multiplied as the age range lengthens; in particular today, many experienced Heads have come to regard 13-18 as making a more homogeneous community than an 11-18 school. What is certain is that the educational process within the child is continuous and, whatever age or stages we adopt, we must not forget this. Teachers need to know what happens, or is likely to happen, to the children in the preceding or succeeding stage of education; and the middle school has the particularly difficult task of gaining familiarity with what is happening in both first schools and upper tier schools. Nor is theory sufficient; to be fair to the pupils, it is necessary to know something of the curriculum, teaching methods and general classroom practices in the preceding or succeeding schools.

### **The Development of the Child**

The most significant fact in primary schools of recent years has been the principle of adapting work to the capacities and stage of development of the individual child. The full class has ceased to be the unit for many purposes, and in many primary schools individual, rather than class or group, work has become the general rule. This accords, of course, with our increased knowledge of the processes of child development. It is a cliché to say that education is concerned with the development of the whole child, but it is none the less true. Piaget and his collaborators have taught us much of recent years about the processes of intellectual development; but we might do worse also than go back and read our Dewey and our Susan Isaacs to remind us of children's needs to gain social confidence, to achieve emotional stability, and to respond with their imagination to people, to environment, and to the arts. All children may pass through the same phases of development, but they certainly do so at different speeds and in different ways. The ease with which they do can vary much depend on the teacher, on the intellectual diet which they are given, and on the environment in the school itself.

The middle years are certainly a period of intense development for most children. The pace of intellectual advance, the differing aptitudes and talents which they develop, and the range of knowledge required to satisfy their needs, are so great that around the ages of 11 to 13 a single teacher cannot expect to meet these needs alone. The task which every good school accepts of catering for the individual needs and potentialities of its pupils calls for new organisational patterns in the upper years of the middle school. How much specialisation is needed? What forms of team work can be developed ? What kind of teachers do we need, and what training measures are necessary to equip them ? Questions such as these lead us directly to the classroom.

### **Factors Affecting the Classroom Situation**

The first is the size of school. The staff needs to be large enough to provide some degree of specialist expertise in every branch of the curriculum and this would normally be difficult to attain with a staff of fewer than a dozen. The Plowden Report made a very reasonable case for two-form entry as the minimum size for an 8-12 school; and this should normally be attainable except in thinly populated rural areas. Schools smaller than this may have to make some sacrifices of curriculum provision. It is probably not necessary to determine a maximum size for a middle school; but a four-form entry school is likely to have between 500 and 600 pupils, and many Heads would feel that this is quite large enough. Larger schools may, it is true, command more specialist facilities, but the pressure on them will be correspondingly increased and the gains may not outweigh the disadvantages of size.

Facilities do of course exercise a powerful influence upon the curriculum and teaching methods in any school, and in middle schools no uniformity need be expected. A few will be purpose-built, and in most of those at present being designed or erected some kind of open plan is favoured, in which flexible grouping, individual work, and forms of team teaching may be expected to develop. For some time to come, however, most middle schools will be accommodated in buildings designed for other purposes, though frequently with some additions or adaptations. Many of the 9-13 middle schools will be housed in former secondary modern premises; these are likely to have specialist laboratories, workshops, and gymnasia of a kind which the purpose-built open plan school does not. If these allow of specialised work in greater depth, they also run the risk of greater rigidity in teaching and of less inter-relationship between the different subjects or aspects of the curriculum. The majority of 8-12 schools on the other hand will be based on existing primary schools, most of which are likely to have as their basic design the square classroom built for 40 children to spend most of the day sitting at their desks. Conversion units are likely to be added to these, and in them there is scope for providing rooms of different shapes, sizes and fittings. Equipment too will be important in determining the kind of educational programme within the school, and initial decisions about what kind of new or additional equipment to order should be taken only after considered discussion by heads and their staffs.

The staff is of course the most important factor of all. Just as the middle schools will have in many cases to inherit existing buildings, so, quite clearly, they will have to absorb existing staffs. Ideally the middle school staff would include members with both primary and secondary school experience and with qualifications which cover the full curricular range. In the early years the "class teacher" will no doubt be the dominant figure, even though team teaching may play a significant part. As the pupils mature, and as many of them become capable of study in depth, the specialist knowledge of the staff will become much more important. What kind of specialist qualification will be required? Ought we to look for graduates to teach science and mathematics, for instance? Ought we to look for fully specialist qualifications in home economics, handicraft and physical education? Many heads, not surprisingly, are nervous that

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middle schools will be unable to attract to their staffs men and women with such qualifications. It is encouraging, however, that in some parts of the country well-qualified specialist teachers have already expressed their willingness to work in middle schools, and in the areas which are shortly to make the change it appears that most staffs will contain a reasonable balance between the experienced general primary and the specialist with secondary experience. Some shortage of specialists is almost inevitable, and is not new. For the future, much will depend on some of the new initial training courses which a number of colleges of education are planning to equip students to take posts in middle schools. In the main, these are likely to give the students some knowledge of child development and a general grounding in primary school practices, but will also include a study in depth of one or two subjects or areas of the curriculum. Local authorities too are showing themselves willing to organise in-service training courses ("conversion courses", as some call them) and these are in considerable demand. The fear has been expressed that some able teachers will view middle schools as a step on the promotion ladder and that this will lead to unstable staffing; but the services of keen young teachers can prove beneficial both to the schools through which they pass and to those schools to which they transfer. There is no reason to take a pessimistic view of staffing prospects; many good teachers welcome novelty and challenge.

## The Curriculum

The question on the Conference working paper: "Has a suitable curriculum yet been devised for such a school?" is a fair one. I have already indicated that a considerable variety in curricular approach and in teaching methods must be expected. If we are to develop the full potentialities of pupils in their four years in the middle school, experiment and variety are to be welcomed, and it is good that the Schools Council has launched a three-year project to study the whole curriculum in the middle years. The truth is that we have in any case constantly to re-examine the content of

our curricula, and nowhere more so than in the middle years. Recent and current developments in the fields of mathematics, science, and French, for instance, are leading to far-reaching changes, and many teachers are adopting with enthusiasm such programmes as those developed by the Nuffield teams. It is significant that the first of these projects in the fields just mentioned covered the years from 8-13. The wind of change is blowing through other areas and subjects of the curriculum too; in a world in which, in this decade, the steam locomotive has vanished and space travel to the moon has become a reality, we have constantly to reappraise the subject matter of what we teach and how we teach it.

All of this calls for a new outlook among those who teach and perhaps even more among those who examine pupils in the upper years of schooling. The Conference working paper declares: "The setting up of the middle schools breaks into the normal five-year secondary course to C.S.E. or G.C.E." One must rejoin: "Why do we assume a normal five-year secondary course ? " We have come to assume it simply because this has been the age range of our secondary schools; but we are surely just as

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capable as were our predecessors of re-thinking our approach. Moreover —disturbing thought—in the light of the vigorous debate now taking place about the balance and content of the sixth form curriculum and about reforms to university entrance requirements, it seems certain that in a very few years from now our sixth-form work will be in the throes of change. And change here must mean in the years leading up to it. The question in fact should be not: "What have we presented to our pupils in the past and do middle schools endanger it?" but: "What ought we to be presenting to them in the future and how do middle schools facilitate it?" The middle school has a splendid opportunity, and if a lot of lumber from G.C.E. "O" level syllabuses goes overboard in the process, I for one shall not regret it. The tyranny of the five-year-long shadow has lasted too long.

Those who organise and teach in middle schools certainly face a period of change; but it is change that should be stimulating and rewarding. I do not think that they will fail in their responsibility to our children.

### **3. The Curriculum, Teaching Method and Organisation of a Middle School.**

**Mr. G. F. Mitchell, Headmaster of Setting Dyke High School, Kingston upon Hull,** read the following paper.

In December 1964 a joint document from teachers' organisations in Kingston upon Hull was issued, accepting the introduction of Comprehensive Education and summarising the varied recommendations of the four major teachers' organisations. In March 1965 the Education Committee finally agreed to accept the recommendation of a 3-tier system; 5-9; 9-13; 13-18+. This was approved by the Department of Education and Science in principle in April 1966 as meeting the requirements of Circular 10/65.

#### **Planning**

Detailed planning which had been going on could now come into daylight and consultative bodies of all kinds, always including teachers, were set up. As the planning neared fruition in November 1967, eight designated Junior High Schools were invited to take part in a detailed planning exercise under the guidance of the Chief Inspector and local H.M.I., in order to discover some of the practical problems which would need to be solved and some of the answers. The schools selected each represented a typical group type. They were each allocated a given child population figure and a staff of roughly half Secondary and half Junior teachers who together covered the

whole range of subjects or, as in some cases, deliberate deficiencies were written in. Ratio 27:1 excluding Head Teachers.

### **Planning Exercise**

It is this exercise which forms the basis of what I have to say this afternoon and the results of the exercise would have been put into effect as reported

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to you had subsequent circumstances made this possible. (In the event numbers and staff have had to be substantially altered but where the planned scheme fits it will be used. To that extent it is realistic.)

My school was opened in 1965 as a purpose built Secondary school for 450+ mixed pupils—fully equipped for C.S.E. and " O " level work, standing in its own playing field and having its own Youth Wing attached.

As a Junior High School we had to plan for 400 9-13 boys and girls with a staff of myself and 15 (+2 reserves) full-time teachers plus one part-time; nine of these were of my own staff and included Deputy Head, Senior Mistress, three Heads of Departments and two holders of Graded Posts—and eight were from a variety of Junior schools holding three Graded Posts amongst them. We lost two of the Junior group in the course of time. (Note that no Grammar School staff were involved—this was a pity.) It is important to add that we were to allow for the fact that about half of our child population would be transported to us by special buses from one of the less privileged areas of the city. (This is to be in fact the real situation.)

In our " brief " we were asked to include in our considerations:—

- (a) The general organisation—mixed ability groups, streaming etc.
- (b) Position of the very able child.
- (c) Position of the slow learner.
- (d) The teaching of the wide range of ability A to E at each age.
- (e) Specialisation.
- (f) Posts of responsibility.
- (g) Pastoral care.

We were also asked not to have inter-group discussions.

The type of planning now outlined is the sort which I am sure is undertaken by many head teachers when establishing either a new school or a school of a new type. I worked broadly along the same lines when I opened my present school and would have done the same for its new role regardless of the exercise we undertook.

The work was done by holding meetings at my school at 4.15 p.m. at intervals of about a month—we aimed to finish each at 5.30 p.m.. From these meetings staff undertook " homework " which was collated and summarised for discussion at the next meeting.

### **Action (Introductory Meeting)**

1. I examined the predetermined facts of premises, equipment, pupils and staff.

2. I then outlined my ideas on the initial plan of attack:—

- (a) Basic organisation.
- (b) Teachers to be invited to select a subject or area of interest and produce a paper on it.
- (c) Curriculum and syllabus.

- (d) Extra mural activities.
- (e) Meals and transport problems.
- (f) School Functions  
(Later extended).

3. I reported on a three day H.M.I. Course held in Hull on the Junior High School. At the course it had been suggested:—

- (a) That the children in the Junior High School would have mental ages ranging from 7 to 17.
- (b) That the intellectual difference between the children is greater in this four-year period than in any other.
- (c) That a Junior High School should more nearly resemble a good Junior School than any other existing type.
- (d) That the Junior High School philosophy should be based on *children rather than on subjects* and that the discovery method of teaching has much to commend it for these children.
- (e) The need for careful consideration of the degree of specialisation and the flexibility of the time table.

4. Personal views of the basic philosophy of our Junior High School:

- Our Junior High School will aim to be a community where work and craftsmanship are enjoyed by both pupils and staff and where everything done has a sense of purpose and direction.
- It will aim to develop each child to the limit of his/her ability and will seek always to pay due regard to influences outside the school which affect the child's personality and attitudes.
- It will ensure that knowledge learnt is progressive and cohesive and bears some relationship to the needs of the individual in the next stage of education.
- It will foster the standards of discipline, behaviour and personal appearance already established in the school, modifying them to suit the new age ranges.
- Positive and practical training in citizenship and responsibility to a community will be an important part of the school's work.
- Sport, religious education and voluntary activities will contribute to the training of character.

### First Decisions

1. CLASS STRUCTURE. (Department of Education and Science, Secondary 30, Junior 40). Approximately equal size in all four years—35. (Some doubts on size of rooms.)

2. BASIC ORGANISATION.

- (a) Unstreamed classes "set" for certain subjects or groups of subjects on ability grading.
- (b) Some type of specialisation at all levels progressing to something approaching full specialisation in the fourth year.

### 3. TIME TABLE

Because of transported children the day is expected to start about 9.20 a.m. and finish at 3.45 p.m. We decided to divide the day into nine periods, each of 30 minutes, understanding that these would often be grouped to form longer sessions. It was appreciated that the first section up to 11.00 a.m. would need to provide varied activity for the younger classes.

9.20-12.15 — 1.30-3.45.

### 4. BUILDING

We looked at accommodation and realised that it would be adequate in one sense but that rooms and equipment were not in the right places for their new roles.

### 5. STAFFING.

Staff could offer a full range of subjects and interests. They thought they would be fully adequate. I have my reservations as to depth when I think of the needs of the 12/13-year-old potential university pupils.

### 6. CURRICULUM

It was agreed to include the following, though not necessarily in the watertight compartments with which many of us were familiar:—

English	Physical and Health Education
Mathematics	Music
Social Studies	Drama
Religious Education	Handicraft and Drawing
French	Needlework
Science and Rural Studies	Homecraft

### 7. SYLLABUSES

Aims and methods were carefully considered and outlines determined.

### 8. ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANISATION TOPICS

The team was divided into groups and invited to submit papers on the following:—

- Problems arising from transported children.
- Parents and School Functions.
- Modification of rooms and building.
- Stock and equipment. Dress and uniform.
- Rewards and punishments.
- Assessment records and reports.
- Out of School activities.
- Special posts.

A lot of detailed work by groups produced very valuable reports.

### 9. THE FOLLOWING PROBLEMS still worried us:—

- Realistic integration of subjects in a time-tabled school.

- Modification of the building. Special posts.
- Reactions of large groups of these ages travelling on special buses.
- Text book etc. transfers. (L.E.A. operation order for this.)
- Links with Senior High Schools.

## 10. CONCLUSION

In the circumstances prescribed but allowing for some variation in the staffing from that originally proposed the problem of organising a satisfactory Junior High School here would not appear to be great.

The building, delightful as it is, will hardly ever be ideal for a Junior High School but is capable of simple modification to provide above average facilities.

The Junior and Secondary teachers in the team have seen eye to eye on most things and there is a very genuine desire on the part of each of these two groups to learn about and adapt for the pupils to whom they are least accustomed. There is no danger of our school being a " senior half"—" junior half" school.

There will be a ready acceptance of pupils from outside our locality and every effort will be made to weld them into one community with those already living here.

I have a feeling that this has all been very domestic and even so I realise that I have left unanswered almost as many questions as I have answered. My notes contain a little more detail at some stages and will be available for your records if thought worthy. Thank you for inspiring me to crystallise my thoughts on what is a still very open ended subject for many of us.

## 4. Delf Hill Middle School

Continuing with the theme " The Curriculum, Teaching Methods and Organisation " of a " Middle School", **Mr. J. S. Nicholson**, Headmaster of **Delf Hill School, Bradford**, illustrated his talk with coloured slides of his purpose-built Middle School in action. He said:— It was in 1964 that Bradford established a two-tier comprehensive system for secondary education, which included as an interim measure use of secondary modern schools, mainly in old elementary school buildings, as junior high schools for pupils of 11 to 13 years. The Delf Hill School is the start of a process of organising these 11 to 13 schools into middle schools for children 9 to 13 years old. The next phase of this is due to take place in September 1970, when it is hoped that the infant, junior and junior high schools in the northern quarter of the city will be reorganised into first schools for children of five to nine years, and middle schools for the 9 to 13s. There have been many consultations within the authority between teachers, officers and parents about these changes, and a second residential course at Scargill House, Kettlewell has been

arranged by the authority to discuss in detail the implications of the big changes in September, 1970.

When the possibility of an intermediate stage was legalised in the 1964 Education Act, the Design team of the Architects and Building Branch of the Department of Education and Science decided to explore the design implications of a middle school and Bradford agreed to collaborate in the building of this school in the Low Moor district of Bradford. As the idea of the middle school came rapidly into prominence further idea-' for design and adaptation were produced and published in Building Bulletin No. 35, which also includes a short description of Delf Hill School.

Since educational ideas on the middle school are as yet so tentative, and with so very little actual experience behind them, it is especially important to stress the tentative nature of the design of the school. To use Mr. Medd's own words: " The plan of Delf Hill is not one that we have dreamed up and hoped that the staff could use it afterwards. Rather, it is based on an intensive investigation, by both educators and architects together, into the educational needs of the 9 to 13 group so far as it has been possible to isolate these needs."

The plan owes its shape then to the kind of flexibility that teachers have asked for and this is provided by built-in variation in the sizes of the rooms; rooms which open out into one another, some totally closed, some extending out into the corridors and a few more rooms more highly specialised but not in the single-purpose secondary manner. The general aim has been to cater for the best primary ways of working extended and developed for older children. In brief, the educational trends which have most influenced the design can be summarised as follows:—

1. Teachers no longer have a set quantity of knowledge to pour in daily for we can no longer regard children as Wordsworth observed cattle in his poem: " Written in March " in 1802:—

"The oldest and the youngest  
Are at work with the strongest:  
The cattle are grazing,  
Their heads never raising;  
They are forty feeding as one."

2. The changed relationship between teachers and children and indeed between children and children is probably the greatest influence on modern school design. The wide variety of activities that have to be catered for and the range of challenges that the school has to offer makes the notion of repeated ranks of classrooms obsolescent. The analytical approach to the curriculum is losing ground to synthesis with the result that the conventional distinctions between subjects are being blurred.

Increasingly, as education ceases to serve the minority who accepted it as a necessary academic process which had to be undertaken, it has been shown repeatedly that it will not do unless it has real meaning and relevance to those undergoing it. It therefore follows that the variety of activity for which the schools have to be designed must match the variety of life for which we hope we can prepare our girls and boys.

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The title of Whitehead's excellent book; " The Disappearing Dais " clearly indicates the trend for education to become less impersonal. Teachers are now amongst the children and not in front of them and with the emphasis on the child learning rather than on the teacher teaching both teachers and children seem more likely to achieve a satisfactory partnership.

From the architect's point of view the most perplexing problem has been the provision of opportunity to study in depth whatever the age of the children. In their own words:—

" The amalgamation of the primary way of life with the older children with no provision for sending 30 or more into a science laboratory etc. is a terribly tricky one in terms of space and equipment. None of us has really seen the problem yet and until it gets going on the ground it will be difficult to see the final solution."

An analysis of timetables in junior schools and the lower forms of secondary schools showed that as the children passed through the schools they spent about:—

30% of their time in the broad field of scientific, mathematical and environmental studies;

30% with languages, literature, religion and so on;  
20% in making and doing things with a variety of materials;  
20% in a variety of activities concerned with music, movement, drama, gymnastics and games.

### **The Plan of the School**

CENTRES 1 AND 2 on the left of the plan are each designed as the bases for two groups of 105 children, but throughout the day it is not anticipated that more than about 170, or so will be working there and sometimes even less than that (i.e. P.E., Music, Games etc. taken elsewhere). Each has its own cloak and lavatory accommodation. The provision in each centre invites co-operation between the three teachers responsible for the children there, since it consists of two rooms (one carpeted) which open out into the practical area, one enclosed room with black-out for radio, occasional music, etc., etc., and a small carpeted reading area enclosed and comfortably furnished for quiet study, reading etc.

CENTRES 3 AND 4 to the right of the plan are the bases for the two older groups. As they will be using the specialist rooms and equipment a great deal, it is anticipated that not more than half of the children will be in the centres at any one time. There are six rooms in the area ranging from 406 to 821 square feet.

*Specialist facilities INCLUDED in the centre are:—*

1. Language room fitted round the perimeter with an 18 booth language laboratory. The central area of the room has no fixed fittings.
2. The Science Room again fitted with all facilities round the perimeter and movable furniture in the centre. Double doors lead directly outside to give access to greenhouse and animal house (open sided).

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Extensions to two of the rooms are equipped and serviced for experimental and practical work. The two enclosed rooms fitted with "dim out" can be connected into one space of 910 square feet. THE STUDIO WORKSHOP (linking the centres) is planned for working groups of about 50 under the care of, we hope, three teachers. It occupies 2,500 square feet and leading out from it is a covered work area 60 feet long and 12 feet wide. The space inside is planned with interconnected zones for different kinds of work: drawing, painting, block printing, needlecrafts, cooking and home economics generally, clay modelling and work with wood, metal and plaster.

**Accommodation for music, drama, P.E., movement, etc.** is separated from the working areas. The music room and instrumental practice room are acoustically separated from the rest of the school and are air conditioned. The hall is multi-purpose and serves for gymnasium, drama, large scale movement and for overflow dining.

Dining accommodation is provided in bays round the main quadrangle, with extra accommodation on one side of the hall. The meals are cooked on the premises.

Showers and changing rooms for both boys and girls are provided near the hall.

### **Staffing**

There are 420 children on the roll and 18 members of staff, including the Headmaster. Some advantage accrues here to the school since the authority has given the school the same staffing ratio as it has given to the present Junior High Schools, where all the children are in the 11-13 age group.

Posts of responsibility include one Deputy Headmistress, four Heads of Department, Grade A, and three Graded Posts. As will be shown in the organisation of the school, single subject specialist teachers will have no place on the staff.

A suggested division of staff appointment is shown:—

*Deputy Head* — Welfare of girls; administrative responsibilities according to interest and ability.

*Senior Master* — Welfare of boys; administrative responsibilities according to interest and ability; special subject help.

1. *Head of Department* — Language, Literature and R.E.

2. *Head of Department*— Scientific and mathematical fields; environmental studies.

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3. *Head of Department* — Practical making and doing, i.e., overall supervision and organisation of the studio area. This area includes the wood and metal facilities, equipment for work in home economics, areas for pottery and clay work, drawing, painting and craft work generally.

4. *Graded Posts* — (1) In the sphere of music, drama, P.E.

(2) To be considered in relation to the staff as a whole and the needs of the school.

Areas of responsibility not specifically mentioned above:—

1. Work with slow learners—organisation of resources for these children throughout the school.

2. Librarian—Overall supervision of book facilities throughout the school. Ordering (in consultation with headmaster and staff), cataloguing, arranging or display. Liaison with public library.

3. Gardens, grounds, greenhouse, animal house.

4. Display work generally throughout the school, particularly maintenance of artistic standards.

5. Games and other outside activities of the school.

### **The work of the Specialists**

If there is no place for the single subject specialist, what will he be able to do?

He will play many roles. At times he will be the specialist helping and advising children in their tasks, joining with other specialists in planning the framework of future activities and at others his work amongst the group for which he has particular responsibility should enable him to relate the contribution of his specialist discipline to the general work in progress.

The brighter children in particular will only be able to work to their full potential if they have the benefit of specialist knowledge to guide their various enquiries.

## **Organisation. Relationships within the School**

This will not only be a new school in the physical sense, but it will be entirely new in concept. From the children's point of view they will have no known methods of teaching and organisation other than those of the primary school and they will therefore be receptive to whatever organisation they find when they arrive.

For the staff this will not be so. They must make adjustments to preconceived ideas of what is best whether their experience lies in the field of primary or secondary education.

## **Joining the new school**

For the children security will come from the sense of belonging to a receptive group working alongside a responsible and sympathetic adult

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to achieve a common purpose. At the beginning the teacher will be more closely involved in establishing the pattern of living and working so that no individual child feels lost or left out. When individuals begin to make contact with each other, the adult's role of originator and leader may well be taken over by the children themselves. As this happens, the teacher will have more time to observe the needs of individuals and the group and though he initiated the fast programme of work, future developments will need the active participation of the children. The teacher's task is clearly then to ensure a strong supporting framework within which the children may develop. In short, it is through working closely together that the groups and eventually the school will gain coherence.

Whilst it is impossible to forecast exactly what the organisation will be, certain fundamental principles can be stated now. The school will be entirely non-streamed. The arguments for or against streaming are too many and too subjective in this context to detail here, but if we are to unify a new school, the divisive effect of streaming would seem to be an odd way to set about it. If we believe in parity of esteem by accepting our children for what they are, then we must give the children parity by not putting them into inferior positions with the self-fulfilling labels of B, C, D, etc."

## **The Curriculum**

### THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

The demands made are much more exacting than ever before. One suggestion is that as Tutor-Guardian, he/she is (a) completely responsible for the welfare of the children in the group and (b) guardian of opportunity, i.e. he/she must ensure that a wide range of appropriate experiences are made available to the children in his/her care. This is a key relationship.

### IN CONSIDERING CURRICULUM:

1. There is need to look at knowledge and skill which a child gains over a LONGER rather than a shorter period.
2. It is imperative to follow the interest at its height and to level up the content of their work with their ability at the time and to allow the child in his individual development to benefit from his disregard of subject barriers. But there will be gaps and there will be failures on the way:—

- (a) Is there any value in the sequence of history and at what stage?
- (b) Are we picking from modern mathematics the attractive and neglecting the necessary ?

GROUPINGS :

From

*Standards* promotion by attainment to

*Classes* whether streamed or unstreamed; the same syllabus and content whether suitable or not to modern primary practice.

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RECENT TRENDS:

**Leslie Smith** has said that if we watch children at play, it shows the school group to be a very artificial form, of grouping. In the streets groups form and reform. Some days a boy is a leader with younger groups, the next he is a follower with an older group. This is what Smith calls a CLUSTER. It could well be the learning group in both Junior and Middle schools.

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