

Joseph Rowntree 1947

Introduction

Details of the 1947 School Prospectus give us some insight into how a post war Britain was responding to the new educational challenges it faced.

If you follow the links on the right you will see some of the motives and ideals which underpinned the founding of our school. Evident in the prospectus is enthusiasm, optimism and a genuine belief in the value of education for children.

The policy outlined by the Head Teacher in 1947 may be phrased differently to our current one but its underlying ethos remains the same..."It is hoped that, when the time arrives for the children to go out into the world, they will know how to seek out knowledge for themselves and will desire to go further in some branch or other of learning. If this objective is attained then, throughout their adult life, they will return in their leisure hours and the school will be recognised as the natural centre for the cultural, educational, social, and recreational activities of the whole of the wide area which it serves. The 'leaving age' will, in fact, never be reached."



Joseph Rowntree



Historical Outline

The members of the Joseph Rowntree Village Trust, which founded and maintains the village of New Earswick, have always concerned themselves with the education of the village children.

With that end in view they built, and have continued to take a close interest in, the older village school, now converted into a primary school. Although built prior to 1914, that building is still, in many ways, remarkably modern, but, by the middle of the nineteen twenties, it was already clear that it could not offer all the facilities required for the full development of the older children.

The Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent, generally known as the Hadow Report, recommended the provision of 'senior' or 'central' schools for all children over the age of eleven, and the adoption of that policy by the North Riding Local Education Authority presented to the Trust a further opportunity for contributing to the advancement of public education. They were advised that this new type of school offered a suitable field for experimental work such as they were well fitted to undertake. It was clear from the outset that it would be extravagant to build such a school for the senior children of New Earswick alone; the Local Education Authority, quite naturally, desired that any school which might be built should serve a larger district and conform to their general plan for educational reorganisation.

It was, therefore, agreed that the Trust should build a Modern School for four hundred and eighty children, and that the North Riding County Council should contribute to the cost under the powers of the Education Act of 1936.

The present school opened on the 12th January, 1942, by the Right Honorable R. A. Butler, M.P., then President of the Board of Education, is the result of this joint effort.

In planning the accommodation of the building, the possibility of the school leaving age being raised was kept in mind, and the school serves the greater part of the Flaxton Rural District. The children attending are drawn from nineteen small villages scattered throughout this area, as well as from New Earswick itself, many of them being conveyed daily by special transport. Soon after building operations began in 1939 the Second World War broke out, and this restricted the choice of materials, made it impossible to complete the projected equipment, and added considerably to the cost. Nevertheless, the Trustees venture to hope that they have succeeded in providing a school which will compare favorably with the best to be found elsewhere.

In the introduction to their report the Consultative Committee say:

"There is a tide which begins to rise in the veins of youth at the age of eleven or twelve. It is called by the name of adolescence. If that tide can be taken at its flood and a new voyage begun in the strength and along the flow of its current, we think that it will move on to fortune"

It was with a desire to realise these ideals that the Trustees proceeded.

They began by conducting an extensive investigation of schools both in this country and abroad. They were advised by the National Institute of Industrial Psychology in matters of lighting, heating and ventilation, and took advantage of the wide general experience of the North Riding Education Committee.

Generally speaking they exceeded the minimum requirements of the then Board of Education where the resulting benefit appeared likely to justify that course.

They remembered throughout that they were making provision for children who were not suited to the type of education found in the normal grammar school, and whose formal and full-time education would end, for the moment, at fifteen. The facilities for practical work are, therefore, full and varied.



School Policy

This country, no less than the world generally, is undergoing fundamental and revolutionary changes. What it will be like at the end of the next quarter of a century, when children now at school are asked to take part in the guiding of the affairs of the community, no man



may foresee. One change, however, seems fairly certain, there will be less time spent in actual wage earning and more time during which all may pursue their own interests. The members of the Consultative Committee appear to have had this in mind in speaking of the need for the training of boys and girls "to delight in pursuits and rejoice in accomplishments-which may become the recreations and the ornaments of hours of leisure in mature years.'

To enable the children to avail themselves fully of the possibilities of this modern world into which they have been born, and so to lay for them the foundations of good citizenship, the school must hold the scales fairly between the so-called liberal arts (*eleuthera mathemata*) and the technical arts (*artes illiberales*) of the Greeks. This is achieved by making practical activity rather than mere passive receptivity the unifying thread common to the teaching of every subject. A good standard in the form room and manual skill in the workshop both have their place and each is complementary to the other, a liberal education alone is not considered sufficient. Cicero tells us that Hippias of Elis, although a great philosopher made with his own hands his clothes, his ring, and his shoes. Centuries later we find Bacon telling us: "This is that which will indeed dignify and exalt knowledge, if contemplation and action may be more nearly and straightly conjoined and united together than they have been."

And coming to our own times, Professor Whitehead, in 1929 says: "The antithesis between a technical and a liberal education is fallacious-the intimate union of practice and theory aids both. Education should turn out the pupil with something he knows well and something he can do well. The intellect does not work best in a vacuum. The stimulation of the creative impulse requires, especially in a child, quick transition to practice. Geometry and mechanics, followed by workshop practice, gain that reality without which mathematics is verbiage."

This train of thought is made the influence underlying all the teaching of the school. In its light the importance attached to the activities of the workshop and other practical rooms is seen more clearly.

Except for the small group of backward children receiving special treatment, all children take an almost common course of study on first entering the school.

Increasing bias is given in succeeding years to the curriculum being followed by each of the various streams so that, towards the end of their period in school, children may be following courses varying widely in content but each related to the needs of those within it and each holding this same balance between types of education formerly thought of as different but

now recognised as one. Further to this policy, any and every opportunity is taken to give to the teaching life and colour; films are used with great frequency, visits are made to places having some connection with the work of the form rooms, children make articles for their own use in the school, and every attempt is made to bring about a desire for learning springing from the stimulation of genuine interest.

Much of the work of the school is related to the children's immediate environment but is in no way vocational training. It matters little whether a child is intended to engage in this particular kind of work or in that. To quote the words of Rousseau: "Before his parents chose a calling for him, nature called him to be a man. Life is the trade I would teach him."

So the school concerns itself more with life and less with earning a living. As the children pass up the school the amount of formal teaching diminishes and there is more direction of personal study and activity. In this way it is hoped that, when the time arrives for the children to go out into the world, they will know how to seek out knowledge for themselves and will desire to go further in some branch or other learning. If this objective is attained then, throughout their adult life, they will return in their leisure hours and the school will be recognised as the natural centre for the cultural, educational, social, and recreational activities of the whole of the wide area which it serves. The 'leaving age' will, in fact, never be reached.

Organisation & Admission

The building has accommodation for four hundred and eighty children, based on classes of forty. The entry is approximately one hundred and thirty children each year. These are organised into three streams, but there are two additional classes, both small. The first consists of the more backward children and these receive special attention, the second is made up of children staying at school for an extra year. The teaching staff consists of the Headmaster and fourteen qualified assistants, seven men and seven women, each of whom has some specialist qualification. Teachers are appointed by the Authority on the recommendation of the Governors. The fabric is maintained by the Trust, while all questions relating to supplies, salaries of staff, etc., are dealt with by the Authority, the school having been built under the terms of the Act of 1936. Under the Act of 1944, it is proposed that the school shall become bi-lateral, by the addition of a Technical branch. Through the Parent-Teacher Association attached to the school, new developments can be explained and the views of parents ascertained.

The school is undenominational in character, but facilities are granted within the school for denominational teaching of those children whose parents desire such. All children take part in an act of Communal Worship at the start of the day and, on one day of the week, conduct this themselves.

The Buildings

The school buildings, playgrounds, playing fields and garden occupy a site of rather more than 14 acres in West Huntington Park, on the outskirts of the village of New Earswick. As will be seen from an examination of the plan, the building consists of a range of form rooms all facing south, with assembly hall, practical rooms, gymnasium, etc., grouped around a grass court. The usual practice in schools of this size and type has been to use either the gymnasium or assembly hall for the mid-day meal. There are grave disadvantages in such duplication of purpose, and the Trustees have provided a separate dining-room with kitchen attached. Particular attention has been paid to ventilation, lighting and heating, and the advice of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology was sought before building was undertaken. The form room windows are of a new design. They are very large and capable of any required degree of opening. In winter they can give enough circulation of air across the ceiling to remove used air, while the heating panels in the ceiling check the downward drift of such a current. In summer they provide for full opening of one side of the form room down almost to knee level. Of the total height of the window, the top third is pivoted to permit of opening to any degree down to the horizontal; below this again there is a smaller section of about a sixth of the total area which hinges at the bottom. This last section can, if desired, be opened until it lies flat on the broad, tiled sill. It is believed that this type of window is unique in its capacity for adaptation to varying atmospheric conditions. A degree of illumination approximating to 10 foot candles is secured in the form rooms, the desks farthest from the main window receiving light both from windows into the corridor and also from clerestory windows above the corridor roof. Artificial light is diffused by the use of large opal globes.

Throughout the school the corridor width is determined by the volume of traffic normally expected, the greatest width being reached outside the main hall to provide a crush space when the hall is emptying. This section of corridor can be sealed off, so isolating the hall from the rest of the building when necessary; it also carries a range of lockers, providing each child with a place in which to keep books and personal possessions. The long principal corridor is slightly curved so as to minimise noise transmission by means of skin friction. The floors, like those of the rest of the school, are of polished hardwood. The walls of the corridors have been left unplastered and are of painted brick. This gives a pleasing texture, and has proved extremely durable in use.

The Laboratory

The laboratory is a large and well equipped room with a special preparation room attached, giving ample storage accommodation. The benches movable, the gas points being concealed in traps in the floor, and there is a generous supply of electric points. Provision has been made for small aquaria with special lighting for observation of the occupants, and a pond in the grounds provides a convenient source for specimens. The work in the laboratory is closely linked with that of the domestic science room, and especially with the teaching of gardening. It was decided at the outset to develop the grounds with the dual object of giving instruction and providing a beautiful setting in which the children might work.

The whole estate is the school garden and not merely the portion devoted to the growing of vegetables and fruit. The vegetable garden proper covers an area of about two and a half acres. Included in it is space for carrying out the experimental work developed in the laboratory and also a demonstration orchard where children may learn the principles of fruit cultivation on lines pioneered by the various research stations.

The Form Rooms

The ordinary form rooms are planned to provide accommodation for forty children, although it is hoped that no form will exceed thirty on roll. The rooms for Needlework and Geography are larger than the remainder, special consideration having been given to the need for space where these two subjects are concerned. Heating is by low-pressure hot water on a system recommended after exhaustive experiment by the National Institute, and consists of heating pipes around the walls at skirting level, and heating panels in the ceilings. All form rooms are fitted with power plugs to allow the use of visual aids, radio and other electrical devices, and there is also a fire-proof room for cinema projection over the corridor at the back of the assembly hall.

The form rooms are unusually well supplied with built-in cupboards, and are separated from each other by double walls without ties to reduce noise. Blackboards are in grooved frames, and long panels of semi-hard pulp-board are provided, to which pictures, diagrams. Etc. may be pinned without damage to the walls.

Each room has an individual colour scheme.

Arts & Crafts

Both the Art Room and the Craft Room are larger than usual, and each has ample storage accommodation extending along the full width of the room. The desks in the Art Room are fitted with hinged lids to allow of them being used as easels. This room has been provided with special windows, the whole of the centre's being in one large piece of plate glass. These windows face slightly north of east, so ensuring suitable lighting for colour work.

The girls learn weaving, embroidery, soft toy, glove and slipper making while the boys, in addition to ordinary book crafts, have constructed their own potters' wheels in the workshop. An electric kiln has been installed for the firing of the ware.

The Trust has also provided a printing press, together with the associated equipment, so that the boys may practice typography, while willow cane basketry provides a useful outlet for those who are less skilled in crafts. Both rooms are fitted with gas and electric points, and each is also equipped with sinks.

The closest possible contact is maintained between the teaching of pure art, design and craft, and also between the teaching of these subjects and that of needlework and handicraft.

The Workshop

This is sited on the west side of the school, and its windows open on to lawns and rose beds. It is an unusually large and spacious room, and very well equipped for its purpose. At one end of the room is a wood store, and at the opposite end a metal store. Both run the full width of the room, and are fitted not only with racks but with deep low cupboards having broad tops. There are also three large display cupboards built into the walls of the room.

The woodwork section carries the normal complement of benches and small tools, and, in addition, there are two lathes, one built up by the boys themselves. Projects of a large character are undertaken (such as the erection of the school glasshouse and frames), but there is also attention to cabinet work, the use of veneers, and marquetry, and this finds one mode of expression in the making of fine brushes.

The equipment for metalwork is generous. In addition to the usual smaller tools, forge and blacksmith's hearth, there is a sensitive feed power drilling machine, power grinder, buffer, 3½ inch and 6 inch S.S. and S.C. lathes, a miller and a power hacksaw, so that quite advanced work, for a school of this type, can be undertaken. In addition to light metalwork, boys do a considerable amount of heavy forging, the latest task to be undertaken being the construction of a pair of wrought iron gates, eight feet between pillars, for the school garden.

Consequent upon the raising of the school leaving age, it is hoped that real precision work in the making of tools will form the final year's work, and that every boy will be able to take away with him a set of his own making. This will point still further the lesson that Mathematics comes into its own in its practical application to the needs of the craftsman.

Boys are encouraged to spend their leisure time in the workshop, and there is a flourishing club attached to it. A high standard of work is insisted upon, and not least of the lessons learned is a pride in the dignity of labour and an appreciation of hand-craftsmanship, coupled with the controlled and proper use of the machine.

Estate & Garden

In addition to learning the normal cultural operations, the boys have the opportunity to acquire some skill in the use of mechanically operated appliances, and have also converted an old car into a runabout truck. To the west of this section of the garden there is a portion of about two acres given over to the keeping of livestock with an additional three acres down to permanent grass and providing hay each year for the animals. The bees are dissociated from this area and stand in an apiary in the centre of the orchard.

The work in the garden is related to other work in the school; the boys have constructed in the workshop a large glasshouse and its attendant frames, and the garden also includes a simple weather station maintained as a part of the work in geography. The purely ornamental sections of the grounds are laid out with lawns, flowering shrubs and roses, and these latter are much used for beautifying the interior of the building.

The art of flower arrangement is looked upon as an important part of the work of the girls in crafts.

Domestic Science

The teaching of domestic science is carried on in a well lit and equipped room in the east wing. Equipment has been installed to permit of cooking by gas, electricity or coal, and there is also an electric washing machine and a gas heated drying cupboard. The girls have the use of a large refrigerator in the kitchen attached to the dining room. Fitted into the ceiling over each table is a 'safety' type point for an electric iron.

Storage accommodation, larder and coals occupy the whole width of the northern end of the room, and the eastern side has sinks along its length underneath the large windows.

Attached to the room is a modern flat in which the Domestic Subjects Mistress and the Headmaster's Secretary reside. The girls work in this flat in pairs for a fortnight at a time and are allowed to invite visitors to morning coffee and to lunch; parents are welcomed. Following upon this period in the flat, the girls undertake a week's work at the Nursery School in the village.

A special room for the teaching of needlework has been provided at the east end of the front block. It is larger than an ordinary form room, light and airy, and is well equipped with all the necessary apparatus. The room is furnished with polished light oak tables and chairs.

In addition to their normal work, the girls are encouraged to maintain contact with the gardening and art craft classes. They assist with the feeding of livestock and keep the building bright with twigs and flowers throughout the year.

Physical Education

The gymnasium is unusually large, being 70 feet by 40 feet by 16 feet. The lights are sunk into the ceiling. At each end of the gymnasium the following are provided: changing room, shower, drying space, lavatories, and heated stores for kit. The instructors have their own rooms, each with its own shower. There is a piano, and a power point for a radiogram when required for folk-dancing. The gymnasium has a door at either end opening on to an asphalted area behind the school.

The playing fields proper, as distinct from the ornamental grounds, cover about ten acres and, throughout the whole of the period the school has been open, have been used for the production of foodstuffs. Alternative accommodation is available in the park on a site of some sixteen acres, which, it is hoped, may eventually become part of the school estate.

In both the assembly hall and the gymnasium, provision has been made for the erection, when required, of a full sized boxing ring, this facility being greatly appreciated by members of the Youth Club and Evening Institute.

Further Education

Each evening sees the assembly of further students, most of them for activities organised by either the Evening Institute or the Youth Club. Both these organisations are sponsored by the Local Authority, and, broadly speaking, the Institute arranges all groups of an educational or cultural nature while the Club caters for social and recreational activities. There is no limit to the age of members.

The classes organised by the Evening Institute are of a very wide variety, some are designed to lead up to recognised examinations, or carry entry to higher grade classes elsewhere, others are in the nature of cultural classes, craft classes and the like. The activities of the Youth Club cover indoor and outdoor games, physical training and sports of all kinds, as well as various social activities such as camps, and visits to places in this country and abroad.

The members of the two organisations have their own canteen and library. Every encouragement is given to them to take a full share in the various activities, and there is a council of elected student-members as well as the official committee under the Authority.