

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Report by H.M. Inspectors

on

CHENIES COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL,

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Inspected on

6th and 10th October, 1955

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This small school, originally built to accommodate probably 50 village children in two classrooms, has for several years now housed as many as 150 to 160 children in the summer months at the peak period of the school year. This extraordinary increase in numbers is due mainly to the fact that, since the war, the school has catered for a much wider area than the village of Chenies, and this extended area, which includes Little Chalfont and part of New Amersham, has been the scene of very considerable housing development.

In the summer of 1946 there were 87 children on roll, but by 1951, when the present Head Mistress was appointed, numbers had risen to 160. The opening of the new Russell Primary School at Chorleywood in 1952 gave some relief to Chenies and numbers fell, but this new school was rapidly filled and in the summer of this year there were again 160 children attending Chenies. There are now, in the first term of the school year, 158 children on roll, of whom 50 are in the two Infants classes. It is estimated that a further 20 to 25 children of Infant age will seek admission before next summer.

The teaching accommodation at present consists of four classrooms. The largest (370 square feet) is occupied by the top class of 44 Juniors. Class 2 (24 Juniors) is in a room of 135 square feet (originally a staff room). Class 3 (38 Juniors) has a room of 305 square feet, and the two Infants classes share a room of 530 square feet divided by a curtain. The school meal, for which nearly all the children stay, is cooked and served in a hired room about 100 yards from the school building. The room is quite unsuitable in size and lay-out for such large numbers, and about one third of the children must take their meal in an upstairs room up a flight of dark, uneven steps.

There will again be some relief to this intolerable over-crowding, and numbers at Chenies will fall somewhat, when the new Amersham Primary School building is completed. Meanwhile, during the present year the Authority have taken energetic steps to alleviate the situation in the shortest possible time. In the early part of the year new sanitary blocks were built for the boys and the girls, and the cloak-room and washing facilities were improved and extended. It is now intended to provide during the current financial year a kitchen, an assembly/dining hall and an additional classroom as part of the Minor Works programme. Further, as soon as possible, it is hoped to build a small Primary School at Little Chalfont.

The two teachers of the Infants' classes, in spite of the extraordinarily difficult conditions, are both doing very good work. They co-operate well together, and the children's day is carefully organised so that they are always purposefully employed and make steady individual progress, particularly in reading, which is notably well taught. Both classes contrive, in spite of lack of storage space, to have a small book corner and a considerable quantity of the right sort of equipment both for their work in number and reading and for painting. They are encouraged to express themselves in speech and song, and, although nothing can be done indoors, their physical education is well cared for out of doors whenever possible.

Class 3 and Class 2, the younger Juniors are taught by two Mistresses, one of whom was appointed this term. In Class 3 the 38 children show a wide range of capacity, but the class teacher handles them very effectively. The work is so well organised that there is an obvious keenness to make individual progress, and the children are notably industrious and kept constantly employed. The teacher in Class 2 is following the tradition and organisation of the school in this respect. A good feature of the work in these two classes, and indeed throughout the school, is the use that is made of the immediate locality of the school, the beauty of its setting and the riches of its natural surroundings.

The top class, Class 1, is taught by an experienced Mistress who has spent ten years at this school. Her teaching is very effective and evokes a notably good response from the children. Their work in Arithmetic and English reaches a very satisfactory standard, and in addition they show interest in a variety of topics about which they talk and write well. Their work in Art is encouraging and is being stimulated by their other interests. A recent school journey to the site of Verulamium was well prepared and carried out. This has formed an excellent basis for work in English and Art as well as in History.

The way in which the staff of this school and the children have surmounted their difficulties of accommodation is most commendable. Far from being defeated

by their lack of space and normal minimum facilities they have accepted them as a challenge. They have established a tradition, now maintained over many years, of cheerful industry and individual progress, a breadth of lively interests and a courteous considerate behaviour between children and adults and among the children themselves. This has resulted in the school having a particularly good reputation over a quite wide area.