DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 026 369 TE 001 000

English in the Primary School: Being the Evidence of the Association Presented to the Plowden Committee.
National Association for the Teaching of English (England).
Pub Date Jul 64
Note-32p.
Available from-National Council of Teachers of English, 508 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Ill. 61820 (Stock No. 22308, HC $1.00).
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC Not Available from EDRS.
Descriptors-Classroom Techniques, Educational Research, *Elementary Education, *English Instruction, Grouping (Instructional Purposes), Inservice Teacher Education, Instructional Materials, School Community Relationship, School Environment, *School Organization, Student Teacher Relationship, *Teacher Education, Teachers Colleges, *Teaching Methods

This outline of approaches to the teaching of English in the primary schools of Great Britain covers the following topics: (1) classroom practices in teaching listening, speaking, reading, drama, and writing, (2) the school organization and environment (size of classes, design of school buildings, ancillary staff, continuity within the school, and teacher-child and school-home relationships), (3) provisions for materials (books, audiovisual equipment, and writing and drawing materials), (4) grouping and selection of students, and their transition to secondary schools, (5) the education of teachers (inservice training and courses provided in training colleges), and (6) areas in which educational research is needed. (SW)

National Association for the Teaching of English

ENGLISH

IN THE

PRIMARY SCHOOL

BEING THE EVIDENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION
PRESENTED TO THE PLOWDEN COMMITTEE

July 1964

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INTRODUCTION

1. Language is central in the process of education. Through language more than by any other means, experience is interpreted, recorded and extended. It is essential to a person's being and to his development; and it bears this same organic relationship to society. We believe that in a healthy society, as in a healthy individual, language - its vocabulary and structure - should accurately and closely represent human thought and experience. Language can invest the experience to which it is a response with a sense of shape and unity, giving the spirit confidence to grow and to seek fresh experience. We recognise, too, the power of language to pervert, to obscure and to deceive; to create unnatural divisions, and to give a dangerous illusion of unity where none exists.

2. We must therefore think of the teaching of English as an inseparable part of the being and growth of individual children and teachers, in their schools and in the community to which they belong. The school must be a place in which children can enrich their experience and imagination, developing a mastery of language in order to express,understand and expand this experience and imagination. Poverty of experience prevents language from becoming fluent and flexible: conversely, dry and formal modes of language restrict experience and the imagination.

3. In practical terms, the teaching of English is concerned with being and doing, thinking, listening, reading and writing. For good or ill, this process continues intermittently both in and out of school, and it is every teacher's responsibility to foster it at all times with sensitivity and skill.

4. Although much good and imaginative work is being done, we believe that there is not enough appreciation of the link between a child's use of language and his widening experience of living. In the evidence which follows, we outline what the Association believe to be an enlightened approach to the teaching of English, and suggest some practical measures to strengthen English teaching in our Primary Schools.

I. CLASSROOM PRACTICE IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

5. Although English is not a 'subject', but a central part of the whole life of the child and of the school, we set out in this section some of the ways in which we think children can be helped in their language development within the framework of the curriculum. For convenience, we consider language activity under four headings, though the matters treated under these continually interrelate.

1. Listening and Speaking

6. These are the first language activities a child knows. They have the closest and most direct links with other aspects of experience, and it is through them that children most use their language. We must, therefore, give them first place in our teaching. Pleasure in listening and talking will stimulate the urge and capability to tackle the harder activities of reading and writing.

7. There are three ways in which children listen and speak in school: (i) talking to one another, (ii) talking to the teacher, (iii) listening to the outside world through radio, television, gramophone records, films and tapes. (They also talk to themselves, which is a necessary activity for nearly all children at some time or other: we do not comment upon this beyond noting that account must be taken of it in any scheme of education.)

8. The teacher must gladly accept that children come to school to talk, and she* must encourage them to do so. In this, she needs the support of her Head Teacher and her local authority, because her school must be so built and its work so organised that a noisy talking session in one classroom

*Many men, of course, give valuable service in primary schools and their number is increasing. However, women teachers form the great majority.

will not disturb neighbouring classes engaged on quiet work. It follows that in talking, as in some other activities, children will work in pairs and small groups for much of the time.

9. The teacher should be conscious that her own speech is her prime working instrument, which she should develop to the highest possible standard. On the one hand, she should take physical and mental care of her speech mechanism, so that she always speaks musically and in a relaxed style; on the other, she should so discipline her thought that what she says is clear, well-mannered and interesting. To good speech she should add a readiness to listen, so that the whole tone of her relationship with children helps to establish mutual habits of candour and natural courtesy in conversation.

10. Most of what we say below about the stimulus and encouragement of writing also applies to speech; a child will speak better, as he will write better, if there is real experience illuminating what he has to say.

11. Literature should play a vital part in the listening and speaking experience of children. They should tell, sing and listen to stories, poetry and song, and move and speak spontaneously in drama. In this connection, we should like to stress the value of nursery rhymes; in these, rhythm, concrete imagery, vocabulary, speech sounds, movement, and feeling, all can find a profoundly simple unity. The human race has a deeply rooted and rich oral tradition of story-telling and song, formalising its fears, its aspirations and its experience. Schools must live in, use and nourish this tradition, for it directly serves their purpose.

12. As aids to listening and speaking work, radio and television sets, gramophones and tape recorders should be generously provided and readily accessible; and teachers should learn and develop techniques of using them in such a way as to bring most benefit to the children. One of the most valuable uses of the tape recorder can be the reproducing of BBC Schools' broadcasts, as the playing of a tape is often easier to fit into a class programme than a direct broadcast. We look forward to the time when video-tapes will similarly be made available.

13. Finally, we think it undesirable to impose on children a standardized form of speech: any attempt to do this may result in children speaking in order to create a good impression on a particular audience, rather than to express themselves truly. We hope children will learn to speak clearly, with gusto and individuality, and with a sense of what is fitting in different situations.

2. Reading

14. It is almost impossible to distinguish matter relating to this section on classroom practice from what will be presented under the heading of Physical and Material Provision, and much of what we have to say will be presented later when we discuss the provision of books.

15. Our first concern is with the teaching of reading in the very early stages. However limited the range of language needs to be, children's reading should always be rich and significant. On the subject of graded readers there seems to be room for disagreement. Some teachers think it is right to build up children's attainment, and hence their confidence, by using a scheme which takes them methodically through graded reading difficulties. Others think that children's reading, like their speaking and writing, should arise from their activities and interests, and that it is best to begin with content of their choosing: thus children first read words and groups of words that they themselves speak, because these belong to objects, actions and ideas which interest them. In any case, we all agree that far too many reading schemes in current use are banal and trivial, and bear little relation to the children's imaginative life. We do not prejudge the outcome of experiments now being made with the Initial Teaching Alphabet, but stress that the claims made for this new teaching medium cannot be assessed adequately until the children's reading attainment, reading attitudes and spelling ability have been followed through to the age of ten or eleven.

16. The will and the ability to learn to read will often come early to children whose experience of language in listening and talking has been varied and enjoyable. We do not, therefore, agree with those who, regardless of children's personal inclinations, advise keeping them away from books until a given age. Nor do we accept the view that there is any fixed age (chronological or mental) at which all children should start to learn to read; since children whose speech environ-

ment is impoverished may need prolonged nourishment of their spoken language before they are ready to start reading.

17. Especially careful thought should be given to children's needs when they have mastered some of the mechanics of reading and are ready to use their skill more freely. At this transitional stage they will be at their most vulnerable: enthusiasm and growing confidence may easily be changed to diffidence, or even hostility. It is now that they need, both in the school and at home, plenty of books that have been written with their needs in mind. They must not be forced back to the books from which they learned to read, nor be expected to read books which are too advanced for them. And to restrict their school reading to textbooks may be to drive them, for relief from these, to the trivial. The teacher must ensure that the freshly learnt skill is not stifled, but is given outlets in the reading of new and exciting books. Many children come late to this stage of their reading careers and remain there long, so that books written for them are needed throughout the primary school, and even at the secondary school.

18. But for children who are reading with confidence and enjoyment, we prescribe no limit but the one their own choice dictates. Books should be available to them in great variety and quantity - books which are well written, true to human experience and the life of the imagination, attractively presented and good to handle - and, as they read these, their teacher should follow their interests, encourage, guide, and otherwise help them to use their reading experience creatively.

19. More research is needed into the teaching of reading, and into the provision of books for children at all stages of reading ability; and teachers should be better informed of the results of such research already done in Britain and America.

20. So far, we have dealt mainly with the reading of children when they are working individually. We abhor lessons in which children in turn read aloud to the whole class, and reading in groups or more than two or three can also become dreary and frustrating. As far as possible, children should be allowed to read books of their own choice at their own pace. But we know how hard it is for a teacher to keep in touch with the reading activity of forty and more children. So we recommend a flexible timetable, which allows for various activities to be going on in the classroom at any one time. Working to

such a scheme, the teacher has better opportunities to make contact with individual children, at times when the remainder are occupied in ways that are purposeful but need less close supervision; and the child who reads aloud to the teacher, free from the pressure of a large audience, is practising his skill naturally and sharing his experience with his mentor.

21. As for children who are exceptionally slow in learning to read, we can only note the whole range of problems which arise; this evidence cannot cover questions of diagnosis, teaching method, etc., beyond mentioning the need, as yet largely unmet, for more research and more dissemination of what is known.

22. All that has been said about the relationship of language to experience applies, with different degrees of intensity, to the reading experience a child should have in school. For the individual reading described above, we recommend that, in addition to stories, poems, and plays, non-fiction be included in generous proportion. But there is also a need for literature of a richer kind, in the reading of which most children need the teacher's help. There are, for example, stories from the Bible, myths, folk tales and legends of many different cultures; the literature of Ancient Greece and Rome, and of Scandinavia, Arthurian legend and other Romance literature, the stories of Robin Hood and the tales of England's remoter past. Their imagery, heroism and wonder make rich soil for young imaginations to root and grow in.

23. When such works, or other works of the same quality, are the basis of class lessons conducted by the teacher, children may indeed come closest to enjoying literature in performance. Not only may they have a shared aesthetic experience through hearing good literature well read and penetratingly discussed, but they may also learn a way of looking at books which they can subsequently apply to their own reading. The teacher should always be able to choose her own material from a well-filled stock cupboard or teaching library, so that whatever book, poem or play she uses fits well into that moment of the children's lives: to read Joe Corrie's "Hewers of Coal" on the day of a mine disaster will enrich children's experience infinitely more than reading Robert Bridges' "London Snow" on a day of sweltering heat. Yet "London Snow" is a fine poem, and we wish to stress that all children

should have frequent opportunities of hearing, speaking and enjoying good poetry. Experience of the true nature of poetry in action, feeling, thought and description, is a profound school for the emotions and will certainly do much to bring out a child's powers of appreciation and expression.

24. It had been hoped to include, as an appendix, some detailed information about primary school children's books, giving titles of recommended books, and setting forth both the qualities we seek and the shortcomings we find; but we now realise that these are matters which must be considered under research conditions, if the conclusions are to be valid and useful.

3. Drama

25. We consider drama to be an aesthetic activity in its own right, which on the whole suffers from too close an identification with classroom "English" and the literary drama, and from being regarded by non-experts as having its main expression in the school play. However, liberation from these limiting concepts is proceeding in some quarters, especially in the primary schools, and the liberating process needs to be hastened. Drama should happen for educational reasons, and not for considerations of school prestige.

26. We think of educational drama as a normal child activity, taking place not in the classroom, but in an open space such as a hall or gymnasium (or the open air, if tape-recorder, gramophone or radio are not required for the particular lesson); here, without audience, children can explore, through action, or words, or both, their whole world of doing and being, and so express what is real to them in life or in imagination. Such work should begin at the earliest stage of schooling, when, to begin with, it is based on play, the activity in which children most naturally become absorbed. From play, and often as play, dramatic activity should move into the wider world of the children's consciousness, taking in a full range of emotions, occupations and situations. For some of the work, every child will be working on his own; at other times children will work in pairs or in groups. Any kind of stimulus may be used, but auditory stimuli, such as music, rhythms, noises and speech, will normally predominate.

27. From free movement and speech of this kind, work should move towards more planned activities, although even in these improvisation should still be a strong element. As individual activity work in the drama lesson can help to encourage and release a child by giving him the opportunity for free expression, so group activity gives him an awareness of others that must be expressed in a harmonious 'group-minded' way. To feel his way unconsciously and sometimes even consciously into other modes of being and action engages a child's sympathy, and exercises his insight and powers of observation. Thus drama on the one hand allows release to the individual, and on the other provides important social education. There is some evidence, also, that children who express their deepest selves through drama find that the activity helps them to come to terms with themselves. That drama and literature can exercise a cathartic and even therapeutic function has been known from the days of the ancient Greeks; we note here that in schools where drama is taught with understanding, there is a direct and beneficial reaction upon problems of discipline. In any case, the variety added by drama to the rhythm of the school working day can only have a good effect on children.

28. We recommend drama as an important teaching technique, not only in English activities, in which it can be a useful aid to the enjoyment and understanding of most literature and language work, but in scripture, history, geography, foreign languages and social studies. One of the best ways of learning how a council chamber works is to dramatise its proceedings: historical and Biblical events come to life for children who are given the chance to identify themselves with their protagonists.

29. The education of the emotions and aesthetic sense which is developed through drama should benefit children's use of language; they will be encouraged to talk spontaneously in controlled situations, and should find in their imaginative thinking and action the stimulus to use a wider and more accurate vocabulary.

30. It is a cliche that children's drama can in so many ways be so satisfying to all who take part in it. The range and variety of approaches is not, however, always realised; there is no one single method, though no experience of dramatic work which does not do justice to the possibilities of in-

formal acting is likely to be satisfying in the long run. The annual 'set play' is not enough. We should like to stress the importance of 'making-up' plays where this can be done, and improvising generally. This is not only legitimate but necessary, if only because so few first-rate plays, which are suitable for young children, have ever been written.

4. Writing

31. In dealing with children (as with adults) who are learning to write, we must bear in mind that of all the media of language, writing is the most remote from direct experience; it is a complex and sophisticated activity. It can be argued that writing is the least necessary, because the least used in adult life, of the language skills for most children, and that if the examination system did not demand written answers, its value would be further reduced. But we wish to stress the importance of the discipline of writing for the child's intellectual and emotional development, which must always be furthered when an experience is given shape in children's writing. In order to foster this exacting art, the English teacher must be encouraging, patient, permissive, tactful and individual in her approach and her demands.

32. We strongly endorse the opinions of the West Riding teachers as given in their 'The Excitement of Writing', and the statement of Sir Edward Boyle at our first Annual Conference, to the effect that children's writing should spring from their own interests, activities and urges; and that the teaching of techniques should emerge from this creative experience, but remain subsidiary to it. We agree strongly with Sir Edward that the testing of English by mechanical means (and this is the sort of testing extensively used in the 'eleven plus' examination) has a bad effect on the teaching of written English, since it encourages the repetitious drill of textbook exercises. We object to questions which invite one-word answers, and to textbooks consisting of passages for comprehension in which the activity suggested for children is the answering of questions by finding information in the passages, or by engaging in profitless exercises of paraphrasing. We deplore the teaching of formal grammar, which, by imposing terms proper to Latin, gives a wrong conception of the discipline of English language, and makes children think of words as meaningless symbols; moreover the teaching of newer kinds of grammar prematurely and abstractly to children incapable of really understanding them would be equally disastrous,

even though the grammar itself might be acceptable to a linguist. We wish all teachers, and especially head teachers (who often dictate that grammar be retained in school English syllabuses) to know that research has shown that teaching grammar to children of primary school age serves no useful purpose and may be positively harmful. If the paraphernalia of bad language textbooks and grammar books were swept out of the classroom, as it ought to be, more money and time could be spent on the proper English pursuits of studying good literature and developing language skills out of this study.

33. We do not wish to give the impression that we are indifferent to the techniques and conventions of written English. We can only state again that we think that these can best be taught after the children have discovered something to write about, and feel the urge to write it. As teachers, we help them to spell the words they want to use; we discuss paragraphing when they are faced with a body of written material to be organised. We suggest means of constructing the more complex sentence when they begin to want to bring counters into a complex relationship; we talk about different marks of punctuation when they feel the need to set down accurately what is in their minds, and to make it comprehensible to others; we explain the use of capital letters when children can see the point of distinguishing between objects and find it convenient to use capitals for this purpose.

34. The first concern of the English teacher should be to allow children's own private experience to stimulate them to write (and talk) out of their own interests, so that they themselves, and other people such as classmates, parents and teachers, may enjoy the result. Thus children will use the material of their personal relationships with family, friends and animals; their experience of home, play, school, shopping and incidents which have made a strong impression on them. For example, a boy of five had the excitement and profound pleasure of seeing a cinema on fire in the High Street on his way home from school: he drew the scene and wrote about it in different contexts at frequent intervals for several months, and we think that his teacher was right to let him do so. To take another example, the experience that a child has of his pet puppy is likely to be deep and various: he knows the animal by all his senses and emotions, by activities he has shared with it, and by delights in it that he has shared with parents, relations and friends.

35. The teacher will find it hard to provide stimuli for talking and writing which compare with these kinds of experience, but she must seek regularly to do just this. She cannot continue to draw indefinitely on the capital of children's haphazard experience of living; she must always feed in new experience to the child, which should be so presented as to affect him deeply and touch him through the life of the senses, the emotions and the imagination. Direct experience in the classroom and outside must be reinforced by discussion, drama, reading of all kinds including books of information, films, filmstrips, records, pictures, models, painting, collage work, music, measurement, recording, and the writing of stories, descriptions, poems and letters. A visit or series of visits to a farm, for example, can lead to an imaginative and informed study of farming, involving all the activities we have mentioned. When the knowledge is running deep and being assimilated through all the faculties, then the talking and writing which grow out of it will have the value of that close and organic relation to real experience which is our starting point in the introduction to this document.

36. The kind of writing which we think should emerge from the English teaching we have described will not be sloppier, but tauter, more vigorous, more individual, and above all more copious, than the stereotyped and formal writing still fostered in many schools. As for the technicalities of handwriting, the acquirement of this manual skill must be subordinated to the creative process of writing, so that the desire to write is not frustrated by undue insistence on neatness and correctness: the relevant criteria are the individual child's needs and capabilities, and the overriding ideal that every child shall learn to write legibly and quickly.

II. THE ORGANISATION AND ATMOSPHERE OF SCHOOL

1. Teacher-Child Relationship

37. The teaching of English demands a permissive relationship within the school and between the teacher and child, if for no other reason than that of giving children the opportunity of using language to express themselves honestly in a variety of situations. The school gives many children their only exercise of extended speaking; in addition, the teacher, as an encouraging and sympathetic listener, gives

them their main stimulus to develop a vocabulary that is often far too restricted. There must be ample opportunity for children to talk about themselves and their interests to the teacher and amongst themselves in pairs and small groups. Children should tell stories, give news items, hold discussions; and all of these can be recorded on tape. Such listening and talking, besides reading, writing and 'play' are all much more likely to be enjoyed in depth in a relaxed, civilised atmosphere than they are in formal, authoritarian surroundings.

38. It follows that a good deal of what we have said about the teaching of English depends for its effectiveness upon the guidance, sympathy and active co-operation of Head Teachers - on their own use of English, their attitude towards and enjoyment of language and literature, their conception of their role and the school's in the education and development of children. Upon these things will depend the whole life of a school, whether its organisation allows real experience and language to grow together, and whether appropriate materials, within the means of the school, are provided.

2. The School and the World Outside

39. The school is only one part of the children's environment and experience; their lives outside usually play a more significant part in their growth than the school. Good relations with parents help to ensure that there is continuity between the two worlds. Practically, this can mean that parents who might not otherwise realise the need will encourage freer conversation at home, and feel more understanding of their children's need to play, talk, read, paint, write etc. Conversely, knowledge of a child's life and interests out of school can help a teacher to establish a sympathetic relationship with him, win his confidence, and so make possible freer communication and more vital activity in school.

40. The school can also preserve a sense of continuity in children's lives by its awareness of their interest in such things as television, cinema, comics, clubs, advertising, cars, pets, holidays, etc. In particular, the teacher should be well-informed and have an open mind about the media of mass communication, and should know how to teach children to evaluate their uses and abuses.

41. Although it is expensive, especially for town schools, to give children direct experience outside the school, local environmental visits and even foreign touring should be considered as normal school activities. They are directly relevant to good English teaching.

3. Continuity and Staff Co-operation within the School

42. Apart from continuity between school and home, which we have just discussed, and continuity from school to school, which is matter for another section of our evidence, there is a great need for continuity within the school. It should operate within a flexible framework, from year to year, from lesson to lesson, from teacher to teacher, and is especially important in regard to the teaching and use of English.

43. If teachers are to derive the fullest benefit from one another's strengths, achieving certain common attitudes towards English teaching, and pooling their knowledge of the children, constant discussion between them will always be necessary. We believe that one way to make continuity in English teaching effective would be to appoint in every school a teacher with a special interest in English teaching. She would not be an English specialist in the secondary school sense, but a class teacher who would be able to guide her colleagues knowledgeably in such matters as the choice and use of books and other materials, and whose own practice would encourage the kinds of teaching we describe. (No doubt the Plowden Committee will be examining the whole question of staffing in the Primary School, and we ask that this need be taken into account when they do so.)

44. Such a teacher would also, in discussion with the Head Teacher and her colleagues, draw up a syllabus of English teaching throughout the school, which would reconcile ideal aims with practical possibilities. Within its framework it would allow individual initiative and point the way to attitudes and practices thought likely, at any given stage of children's development, to achieve the aims of good English teaching. Indeed, in its organisation, it might follow the lines of children's development rather than class and year divisions. Such a syllabus would be constantly revised through discussion in the light of changing situations.

45. We also recommend what, by implication, we have already commended: a free and flexible timetable, which

enables the teacher to organise her time according to the needs and interests of the children as she sees them, so that work in hand may grow in an organic way, and planning of varied group activities is made easier.

46. Among school activities which require staff co-operation, and which both reflect and affect the quality of English throughout the school, we mention the daily assembly. So often this ceremony is among the least significant of school experiences, and the language of it is banal and empty. Head teachers should give care to the quality of language in prayers and hymns, and use the assembly for the reading of good poetry and prose and the hearing of good music. It can be the occasion for children to perform short plays and take an active part in reading, reciting, singing and making music. Being a ceremony in which the moral intention largely subsists by aesthetic presentation, assembly is very much the business of the teacher of English.

47. What we have discussed under this heading has a direct relevance to the rapid turn-over of staff which is at present hampering educational progress in many areas. We believe that new teachers in a school have more chance of becoming effective quickly when the atmosphere they go into is permissive, and where staff have some common understanding of aims and practice and working concern for the continuity of the children's experience.

4. Size of Classes

48. Everything we have said so far points to the need for children to work often on their own or in small groups, and to their positive right to individual contact with the teacher. The kind of teaching which will fulfil such needs and rights requires great skill and hard work on the teacher's part but she is severely restricted in her scope when she has a class of forty children housed in a classroom with no space for anything but desks. It is not enough for society to say that teachers work wonders in their overcrowded classrooms - however true this may be. The fact is that only the most skilful and devoted teachers can work in an enlightened way, in poor conditions and with inadequate facilities, and even these could do still better in really good conditions. In any case we have to make it possible for the average teacher to give every child a fair chance to develop.

49. We recognise that there is a shortage of teachers, and appreciate the various factors in the problem; nevertheless we recommend as strongly as possible that urgent steps be taken to reduce the size of classes in primary schools. In particular, we assert that the size of a primary school class should be the same as that of a secondary school class, and see no justification for different treatment in this respect being given to the two different types of school.

5. Ancillary Staff

50. If teachers are to give children the kind of attention that good English teaching demands, they should be relieved of non-teaching burdens by non-teaching staff and given positive assistance in such matters as the preparation of materials and classrooms for children's use.

6. School Buildings

51. Two particular aspects of school design appear to us to concern the teacher of English.

52. The first is the problem of noise. All teaching is spoilt if the arrangement or construction of school buildings permits a class to be disturbed by outside noise. Whether this be caused by outside traffic or by other classes working normally, attention is distracted and concentration lost; and any sense of mood or atmosphere appropriate to special activities is destroyed. Many old buildings, such as those in which classrooms surround a hall now used as a gymnasium, are badly arranged, and there is evidence even from recently built schools of teaching being made impossible by the noise of children moving along corridors, or of wind and rain on roofs and windows.

53. The relevance of this to English teaching is obvious - all oral work is hindered, and even normal conversation is difficult. If voices have to be raised, or if there is no quiet for thinking, it is hard to create either a pleasant social atmosphere or a climate for concentration.

54. We understand that even at the building stage complete sound-proofing is very expensive, but that at any stage reasonable sound-absorption is comparatively cheap to obtain. We recommend, therefore, that Head Teachers examine the state of their own schools, and that local authorities be encouraged to act in this matter.

55. The second aspect is the limited concept of what constitutes a work-place for children. Greater flexibility and variety of design are needed to enable children to work in groups of varying size when needs arise, and to allow clear spaces for unrestricted work in movement and drama. It is important to get away from the notion of a classroom as a kind of box in which so many children may be accommodated while away from home. As for school halls, the unimaginative provision of small and inflexible proscenium stages cramps both the style and organisation of dramatic and musical endeavours designed for large groups of children.

56. No doubt the Committee will be aware of the references to school architecture in the Newsom Report; these seem to us to reveal an unusually perceptive understanding of how educational activities can be promoted by architectural design.

III. PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL PROVISION

57. We wish to challenge the differential applied to the money allocations for secondary and primary schools, especially if this differential is based on the assumption that primary schools need fewer and cheaper books and less material. Much of the material, especially books, which is essential to good English teaching at primary school level is expensive and is needed in abundance. It is a fact that in many areas Head Teachers have to buy books out of the marginal amounts left over from their captiation allowances after they have bought 'essentials'; it is often a penny-pinching matter. If children are to work on their own and in groups, they must have a varied and generous supply of books and materials with which to work, and also they need the attention of a teacher who can give her whole energy to their needs, unharassed by poor working conditions.

1. Books

58. There are four considerations which appear to us to complicate discussion:

(i) The number, quality and suitability of books available to children and teachers in the classroom varies very much from one area to another.

(ii) It is sometimes not clear whether the right books for certain stages are out of print, or whether they are in print but too dear for extensive use.

(iii) It is not certain that, given the limitations imposed by the size of book allowances, the best books are chosen by teachers.
(iv) The influence of publishers, with their varying policies, is hard to assess. Some appear to use too much of their resources and sales persuasion on traditional classics, plain-text, abbreviated, or re-written, or on graded readers and books of exercises - all types of book which they hope, in their implicit reliance on formal class teaching, to sell in sets of thirty or forty. Others appear to be constantly aware of trends in society and in educational thought, send their representatives to educational conferences, and set out genuinely to serve a customer whose needs are constantly developing. All are bound to be affected, in their standards of book production, by their knowledge of what teachers can buy with their book allowances, and by their experience of what teachers have bought in the past.

59. Thus, although the problem is not exclusively one of a shortage of money, there remains the clear need for more books, and more suitable books, in the primary schools; books which should be freely available in the school and in the classroom. Children need plenty of good, carefully chosen books, which may or may not have been written especially for them. Children's taste in books is usually both eclectic and catholic, so that assertions about the kinds of books they like might lead to too narrow a selection process; nevertheless it should be possible for the teacher to spot, and reject, the book which is ostensibly written for children, but is in fact designed to catch the adult purchaser's eye. Also, she should be able to find some way of reconciling what children like with what will enrich their experience if they will persist in it.

60. In books produced for children, such matters as vocabulary, sentence structure, illustration, size of print, and standards of reproduction and physical material should be considered with special care and professional skill; but the quality which above all others should distinguish every book is its author's real creativity as a writer. This applies equally to all kinds of books, and not only fiction. Even for the youngest infants, we need books containing stories written in clear, simple language which is appropriate to children's experience but not condescending.

61. The illustrations to the text should have similar qualities. (The pictures and coloured lettering in the Oldbourne

Press 'Aladdin and Other Stories' and 'Puss in Boots and Other Fairy Tales' give a fine example of how good colour printing can figure in big books costing only 9/6d.) The best 'top infant' classes will have in them, in single copies, a large variety of well produced and well illustrated stories of the kind to be found in the junior section of a good public library (e.g. 'Peter and the Wolf'; 'Peter and his Tricycle Flash'; 'Millions of Cats'; 'The Cow Who Fell into the Canal'; Jeanne Marie books). Often these will cost 10/-, 12/6d, 15/- or even more; but though expensive, they are badly needed. In short, books should have qualities of content and presentation which invite children to treasure them.

62. Graded readers have their uses but tend to have the quality of compilations rather than of works of literature; they should therefore always be supplemented with the kinds of reading we recommend. All the books children read, including those they write and draw themselves, should become part of the intricate cross-reference between reading and writing which is essential to their whole language activity.

63. In what we have called the transitional stage of reading, there will be no marked change in the style of books offered to the children. They will continue to read picture story books of the quality we have described, progressing, though not in a rigidly planned way, to books with denser text and a diminishing proportion of illustrations.

64. Finally, we wish to emphasise that books of the kind we recommend should always be bought in preference to course books and books of exercises. If teachers are to find out what books are available, they need freer access to books for their own reference and to inspection copies of children's books; we urge that the excellent practice by which certain local authorities maintain permanent book displays and teachers' reference libraries be extended.

2. Writing and Drawing Materials

65. The real needs of children, who are happiest when working in an unconfined way, should determine what materials they use for their writing and drawing. We suggest that cheap, expendable writing books, smaller than standard exercise books, blocks of coloured paper of different sizes, non-ruled books and coloured pencils be generously provided. While some schools are reconciling themselves to the use of ball-point pens, others are extending the use of fountain pens such as Osmiroid (5/9d), which are efficient and relatively

cheap. Whatever method is used, it is to be hoped that the dreary ritual of giving out, at the start of a 'writing lesson', grubby wooden pen-holders, will soon be a thing of the past. With regard to materials for art and craft activities, there is almost no limit to what can be provided and, as with books, teachers need constantly to receive information about the new materials which become available.

3. Audio-Visual Equipment

66. We consider audio-visual equipment to be important. The film and filmstrip projector, tape-recorder, sound radio, television, gramophone, should be by now standard equipment in schools, readily accessible in all classrooms and constantly kept in working order. This presupposes the existence in teachers of the appropriate skills to work them, the giving of thought to the problem of flexibility and portability in equipment, and the quick availability of technical assistance. Moreover, school designers should take account of the latest developments in the use of audio-visual equipment.

IV. STREAMING, SELECTION AND TRANSITION

1. Streaming

67 Disregarding the advantages and disadvantages of 'streamed' and 'unstreamed' classes, in teaching our own language to children we are more interested in what brings them together than in what, though perhaps easily examinable, sets them apart. Provided always that children can work much of the time on their own or in small groups, it is relatively unimportant how they are placed in the larger 'class'.

2. Selection

68. We oppose at any stage methods of selection which vitiate good English teaching. The mechanical tests still widely used for selection at the age of eleven put pressure on teachers to waste time teaching those aspects of written language which, though easily tested and reliably marked, are unimportant in isolation. The pursuit of regular high achievement in this drudgery seriously reduces the time available for the more important attainment of fluency in normal speaking and writing situations, and brings children under the influence of the worst secondary school methods of teaching English.

3. Transition

69. Our present system of transfer at eleven causes a break in teaching and learning where none should exist, and it is well to remember that what may by custom be administratively efficient may not necessarily be educationally sound. Some children at eleven may have outgrown their primary school and be invigorated by the change; others, confronted by new buildings, new teachers and older children, may be seriously disturbed. As teachers of English, we are always aware that the mastery of language is a continuous process. It is deeply influenced by emotional stability, and if this is destroyed, then language suffers, and with it, all for which it is the means of communication.

70. We note with dismay that there are teachers who accept this transfer as natural: they accept with it the implicit segregation of the children they teach, and even regard themselves as different, Primary and Secondary, creatures. We are concerned because the tendency (about which many secondary schools of all kinds are also anxious) to put a premium on unco-ordinated subject disciplines in the education of older pupils has to a considerable extent and for a long time been affecting both secondary modern and primary schools. The drive to achieve qualifications at the expense of everything else, through a pattern of instruction and rote-learning, permeates society, and the teachers of younger children, themselves the product of grammar schools and GCE, are under pressure to produce traditional '11+ winners'. Many teachers in the secondary schools have to grapple with the consequences, certainly in English. It is our concern that the radical re-thinking of educational aims and methods which is already in progress in nursery and infant schooling should permeate the rest of the primary stage, and also the secondary stage, of education.

71. We therefore recommend that primary and secondary school teachers find ways of working together in the interests of the children who pass through their hands. They are virtually the same children at eleven minus and eleven plus, and it is essential that all teachers have a sympathetic understanding of common aims. If the transition from primary to secondary school is to be made, not across formidable

barriers into unknown territories, but in such a way that children progress harmoniously to a larger environment, then some kind of local consultation and co-operation must be established. (There is a particularly strong case for close liaison between the primary and secondary teachers of backward and retarded children who, more than others, tend to suffer from the abrupt transition to a new and more complex environment. It is most desirable that their secondary teacher should know them and their histories before they leave the primary school, that he should be informed about their progress during their final primary school year, and that he should have a common policy with his primary colleagues on methods, processes and reading schemes.) In some areas, much will be achieved by voluntary action, fostered by such bodies as the N.A.T.E., but we urge most strongly that local authorities should make possible the active co-operation of primary and secondary school teachers in their common task. A day in a good infant or junior school can be, for a secondary school teacher, a stimulating and enlightening experience.

V. THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS

72. Time and again our thinking has been brought back to the importance of the individual teacher - her own use of English, her attitude towards, and her knowledge of, language and literature, her conception and practice of her role and the school's in the education of children. Just as good English teaching achieves most when children's individual needs are most in mind, so it is best served through the diverse gifts and preferred techniques of individual teachers. We do not expect the same of all teachers, nor do we define ideals on the assumption that all are equally skilled, devoted and enterprising. Movement towards the ideal depends on two things: the creation of conditions in which even the average teacher can give every child a positive education, and the training of teachers who can make best use of these conditions. The improvement of English teaching in the Primary School depends on the success of colleges and universities in sending out people who are not only efficient in the techniques of teaching and knowledgeable about what they are to teach, but also complete in their endowment as human beings.

1. Training Colleges

73. The Training College must provide the kind of en-

vironment which will contribute to the emotional and intellectual development of intending teachers: they must have rich and inspired teaching, working conditions which facilitate genuine, disinterested study and research, freedom to develop in their own ways, both personally and in the running of their own community; and as they develop, they must at all costs never lose the spirit of idealism. In this evidence we concern ourselves only with the kinds of courses and provision that we think are likely to produce better teachers of English in the Primary School.

(i) English Studies

74. Three years is not a long time in which to undergo a thorough professional training and carry out personal studies as well. But since primary school teachers all teach English directly or indirectly, we believe that substantial time should be devoted to English studies at College. Some colleges allot three hours a week to English for two years, others only two hours a week, or even less, for parts of five terms: we ask that all colleges should give, not a minimum curriculum course, but a generous basic course in English, which will fulfil a wide function of personal education as well as the practical needs of a teacher, whatever other subjects she may teach. A course of English studies should include:

75. A complementary study of literature and language at the student's level. The student's reading should be planned so as to make her more sensitively aware of other people, contemporary society, and the world around; it should lead her to reflect more deeply, to compare and discriminate, to discuss, and to write. It should be a worthwhile extension of her experience, in harmony with her stage of development. A study of language, the purposes it serves both for the individual and for society, its changing and flexible nature, is recommended. The source of this study will be language in action as an aspect of experience - literature, conversation, mass communication, children's writing and talking. The ideas about language study which have been in process of development recently, some of which throw light on the emotional and intellectual development of young children, should also be considered.

76. Drama. Besides studying plays, the student should, as part of her English studies, make, perform and watch them.

She should also gain experience, through participation, of the kind of educational drama described on pp.17-9. She should thus learn that there are other forms of communication besides the purely intellectual, and that language has a part to play in all alike.

77. Speech. Any scheme of English studies must begin with spoken English. Along with the discussion and drama already mentioned, speech education should play an important part in the teaching of English at the student's own level, as well as entering her specifically professional studies. In the latter, it will deal with the teaching of spoken English, reading, stories, poetry, plays, discussions, debates, written English and the use of English throughout the life of the school. The student must learn to read aloud, to tell stories, to discuss, to debate, to describe and to speak to a class effectively. In all these activities, she should reach a high standard of fluent, well-mannered speech with good articulation. She must also learn the complementary art of sympathetic and intelligent listening. Speech training should not drive out other kinds of English study; but we strongly recommend that colleges should raise the standards they require for qualification, and that they should also provide advanced speech courses for students with special ability.

78. Children's literature. Although it is not the only important consideration in the teaching of English in schools, children's reading needs special mention here, for we believe that sheer lack of knowledge about children's reading-matter at all levels is the main source of mechanical teaching methods, just as lack of books and materials drives teachers to excessive class teaching. The student must read for herself, and discuss with her fellow-students and tutors, as many children's books as possible, and also begin to learn discrimination in choosing and using these books.

(ii) Visual Arts, Music, Movement

79. Imaginative experience in these disciplines reinforces English Studies in the training of teachers of English. Such activities grow out of experience and formalize it, thus giving another dimension to the student's understanding of the relationship between experience and imitative expression, of which language is the most universal and pervasive form.

(iii) Integrated studies

80. It is unlikely that students whose whole formal education from the age of eleven has been founded on unco-ordinated subject disciplines will understand in any depth what is meant by integrated studies in the Primary School. Students should be taught, therefore, in a way that recognises the wholeness of the process of learning and the language that grows with it. But when undertaken in College, integrated courses must possess organic unity and be capable of stimulating genuine academic response, so that they achieve the status of subject disciplines.

(iv) Training College Libraries and Audio-Visual Aid Facilities

81. College libraries should be much more richly and variously endowed with books than they are. They should contain, besides works of scholarship, fiction and general reading, and books on teaching and related subjects, an abundance of children's reading, enough to fulfil every requirement of school practice and professional studies. We also recommend that training colleges be provided with enough of the various items of audio-visual equipment for students to be allowed to handle them freely, and so to become proficient in the techniques of using them in the classroom.

(v) Professional Qualifications

82. Everyone who is to teach English in the Primary School, whether qualifying at training college or elsewhere, should attend a course of English and professional studies such as we have described; or, when it is not possible to demand this, that entrants to primary teaching should possess the kind of insights and knowledge which such a course ought to provide. In any case, assessment of students' attainment should be more exacting than it is at present.

83. Finally, under the general heading, 'The Training of Teachers', we give it as our firm opinion that teachers are unlikely to develop the permissive, imaginative and sympathetic teaching methods we have recommended if they are trained at college by very different methods. In too many colleges, the curriculum involves long hours of lectures and formal teaching, and student social life is still restricted or over-managed. We believe that the colleges should encourage their students to work more on their own and in small groups, in a spirit of enquiry and discovery.

2. Schools

84. The training of a teacher should continue throughout her career. The school environment of her first years' teaching can significantly develop her professional powers, and compensate any deficiencies in her initial training; but if the school is bad, it can embitter her and destroy seeds of educational idealism planted in a good college. Especially during her probationary period, the supervisory role of the Head Teacher is vital; we would expect him or her to be willing and able to encourage the new member of staff to use and teach English well. We think that young teachers should have opportunities to see others teach, as there is much to be gained from watching both more and less experienced teachers at work. We also consider that a new teacher's work in English would benefit from the influence of a teacher, such as we have described, with a special concern for English throughout the school.

3. In-Service Training

85. This is a matter which needs major re-thinking. At present, teachers' courses are haphazardly and often scantily provided, while their quality is occasionally suspect; they are attended on the whole by only the keenest teachers, and not by those who most need them, and the best courses are often over-subscribed. We urge that a full and extensive system of in-service training be established, possibly based on Institutes of Education. Courses should offer opportunities to teachers to extend their knowledge and enjoyment of language and literature as well as to develop their teaching resources; we believe that the aesthetic life of the teacher of English is often neglected, both by her and by those who employ her. We very strongly recommend at least one week's in-service training every three years, as a compulsory refresher course.

86. The course of most value to the teacher is the one that lasts for a term or a year, and takes her out of the classroom to read, discuss, reflect, and gain new experience. But we also recommend shorter courses, even those of one day's duration, provided that in their spirit and content they bring real strength and enlightenment to the teacher.

87. We wish to point out the value of exchange visits, or even exchange appointments, between teachers in different kinds of schools and in different parts of the country. Such exchanges would enable teachers to use their imagination and language patterns in fresh situations and give them new resources of many kinds. And they would not be lost to the classroom, even temporarily.

VI. RESEARCH

88. Much research into the teaching of English in the Primary School is needed in order to discover what is being taught, how it is being taught, what materials and books are being used and how these are supplied, and what facilities exist for both the training and the practising teacher. On many specific matters, information is urgently required; for example:

1. Use of School Time

89. We need to know how much time is spent on specific English teaching, and how this varies from age to age in the school; how this time is used, and how much of it is spent on oral work, written work, reading to and by children, prose, poetry, drama, spelling, handwriting, formal grammar, comprehension exercises.

2. Reading

90. We are not satisfied with the general level of basic texts used in Infant and Primary Schools, and we suggest that a survey of existing publications be made, in order to establish whether their content is relevant to the children's experience, what kinds of vocabulary and sentence structure are to be found in them, and what effects, if any, the use of Basic Readers has upon children's subsequent language development.

3. Libraries and Books

91. Training Colleges. We should like to know how far libraries fulfil students' own needs in literature of all kinds, and whether they have good stocks of children's books, especially fiction; and also what use is made by students of training college libraries.

92. Schools. We need to know how many primary schools have school libraries, how many rely on class libraries, and how many schools have both; and what is the proportion of reference books to fiction and poetry at different age levels. We need to know which kinds of books are most read by children of different primary school age groups, how many local authorities have school circulating libaries or facilitate book exchanges among schools, and how books are actually chosen for children.

4. Formal and Informal Teaching

93. Since much or our discussion has concerned itself with the old tradition of formal teaching which still often persists and with a newer more informal approach to teaching which is still far from universal, we suggest that further research be conducted into them, and particularly into the teaching of spelling and grammar.

5. Streaming

94. We should like to have firm evidence, if any can be found, of the effect of streaming on the teaching of English in the Primary School.

95. The N.A.T.E. would be glad to co-operate with the Plowden Committee in the field of research. If funds were made available, the N.A.T.E. could, for instance, supplement a formal survey by enquiries conducted through its many local branches.

Summary of Recommendations

I. CLASSROOM PRACTICE IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

Para.	
6	That in English teaching, the primacy of speech be recognised.
10	That children's speech work should be based on their own interests and experience.
11	That the nation's oral tradition be used and fostered in school.
13	That clear, lively speech, rather than 'Standard English', be the aim.
16	That teaching children to learn to read should be approached pragmatically.
18	That children be plentifully supplied with good books.
20	That 'reading round the class' be discouraged.
22	That Bible story, myth, legend and Romance be included in the curriculum.
23	That good poetry be widely used in the classroom.
25-7	That drama be integral to the English course and
28	That its use as a teaching technique be developed.
32	That children's writing should spring from their own interests, activities and urges, and that the testing of English by mechanical means, the teaching of formal grammar, and the haphazard use of certain kinds of comprehension book, be discontinued.
33	That the teaching of the techniques of written language should arise not in vacuo, but from the children's need accurately to express themselves in writing about what concerns them.
34	That teachers should reinforce children's own experience with new experience provided in the school by every possible means.
36	That the main aim in teaching children handwriting should be to help them to express themselves legibly and quickly.

II. THE ORGANISATION AND ATMOSPHERE OF SCHOOL

37	That permissive, sympathetic personal relationships be aimed at between teachers and children.

Para.

39-40 That contacts with, and knowledge of, the child's world outside school be pursued by teachers.

41 That school visits be more actively encouraged and supported.

42 That continuity of approach to the education of children be aimed at throughout the school.

43 That a special (but not specialist) teacher be appointed to co-ordinate this continuity in English matters.

45 That the timetable should be flexible, not rigidly indicative of different activities at different times.

46 That more care be devoted to the presentation of the daily assembly.

48 That it be recognised that much of the best English teaching is done with children working alone or in small groups.

49 That primary school classes should be smaller, and that primary schools be given the same treatment as secondary schools in the matter of size of classes.

50 That ancillary staff be appointed to relieve teachers of non-teaching work.

52 That noise outside the classroom be recognised as a main obstacle to good English teaching.

54 That both existing schools, and those to be built, be sound-proofed as far as is practicable.

55 That classrooms and school halls be designed more flexibly.

III. PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL PROVISION

57 That as much money be supplied to primary schools for books and materials as to secondary schools.

59 That the quality of books used in school be improved.

61 That single copies of many books, rather than sets of few books, should be the basis of primary school literature work.

62 That graded readers, when used, should be supplemented with good books.

65 That writing and drawing materials be various, copiously supplied and easy to use.

66 That audio-visual equipment be plentifully supplied.

IV. STREAMING, SELECTION AND TRANSITION

Para.

68 That selection processes which entail the use of bad English teaching techniques be discontinued.

69-71 That every effort be made to make the (at present largely artificial) transition at the age of eleven a harmonious one.

71 That primary and secondary school teachers co-operate over this transition.

V. THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS

72 That those who train teachers should aim to produce completely endowed human beings.

74 That training colleges provide a thorough course in English Studies, giving personal education as well as professional capabilities, and including

75 a study of language,

76 the practice of drama,

77 a thorough speech course,

78 a study of children's literature,

79 experience of the visual arts, music, and move-

80 ment, and experience of integrated studies.

81 That training colleges be provided with better library and audio-visual aid facilities.

82 That the qualification for entry to Primary School teaching be made more exacting.

83 That methods of study and student government in training colleges approximate to the permissive, imaginative and sympathetic atmosphere which all teachers should be expected to encourage in primary schools.

85 That in-service training courses be extended and regulated, and that at least one week's in-service training every three years be made compulsory for all teachers.

VI. RESEARCH

88-94 That research into all fields of primary school English teaching be undertaken.

95 That N.A.T.E. take part in this research.