

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

REPORT BY H.M. INSPECTORS ON

Blue Coat School, Liverpool

INSPECTED on 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th MARCH, 1961

NOTES

THIS REPORT is confidential and may not be published save by the express direction of the competent authority of the School. If published it must be published in its entirety.

The copyright of the Report is vested in the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office. The Controller has no objection to the reproduction of the Report provided that it is clearly understood by all concerned in the reproduction that the copyright is vested in him.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CURZON ST., W.1.

Nature and Scope

It became evident in the years immediately following the issue of the inspection report of 1947 that changes must be made in the character of the school. Finances were in a critical state and there were urgent problems of accommodation and equipment. Lengthy discussions between the Governors, the Local Education Authority and the Ministry of Education resulted in the proposal to establish a bilateral, voluntary-aided secondary school for boys, to include day-boys and boarders. Agreement was finally reached and the scheme was framed in the spring of 1949. According to the scheme the day school was to be administered by the Local Education Authority and the boarding school by the Governors of the Bluecoat Hospital. Pupils of junior age were to be transferred to a local primary school and the girls were to be absorbed into other schools. The old Hospital School ceased to be: September 1949 saw the opening of the reorganised school. In addition to boys of secondary age already there, three new forms were admitted, two selective forms (one of boys aged eleven and one aged thirteen years) and one non-selective form of boys aged eleven years. This pattern was repeated in the following year. The Local Education Authority further agreed to be responsible for the boarding fees of thirty pupils each year, at a cost of £130 per pupil, for five years. This agreement was renewed for a further period at a cost of £160 per annum for each pupil.

At the present time, March 1961, of a total of 417 boys, 125 are boarders and 292 are day boys. There are 260 boys in grammar forms and 157 in modern forms. The boarders, many of whom have parents in the services at home or overseas, come from all parts of England, and Local Education Authorities regularly seek places here for necessitous cases. Selective pupils gain entry as a result of normal local education authority procedure, but the selection of those seeking entry on the modern side rests with the head master. As many as 180 boys have, in the past, applied for thirty places, and the head master has made a random selection, without examination or interview, taking boys from the immediate neighbourhood first and balloting for the remaining places. The wisdom of this course is questioned on the grounds that, with a one-form modern entry in a bilateral school, it is extremely difficult to cater adequately for the least-able boys.

The exact size of the school for the future is still in doubt. A full three-form entry each year is envisaged, but the disposition of pupils into selective and non-selective streams has yet to be decided.

The school continues to have strong Church of England ties. The chapel, shared at the moment by the local parish, is the focal point of the spiritual life of the school. Services are regularly held there and the head master personally conducts a number of them.

Of the 95 grammar school pupils and 96 modern pupils who have left in the three years 1958-1960, ten have gone to universities, three to teacher training colleges, eleven to other forms of further education, thirteen to the armed services, twenty to apprenticeships and thirty-one to office work. The balance have taken up a variety of other posts. In 1957 three boys won local

major awards, in 1958 two, and one boy in 1959 was awarded a £300 textile scholarship to Manchester University.

Advice on careers is given by the head master, the careers' master, the sixth-form master and the Youth Employment Officer. Talks and interviews are regularly given and there is an annual meeting for parents and staff. Specific literature is available to all boys and there are books of interest in the library. The head master and the careers' master attend local meetings, and the head master has many personal contacts which are valuable in placing boys in employment.

The Governing Body

The Instrument of Government provides for twelve Foundation Governors, to be appointed by the Governing Body of the Liverpool Blue Coat Hospital and School, and six Representative Governors, to be appointed by the Local Education Authority.

At present eight members of the Board of Economy act as school governors together with the six representative governors appointed by the Local Education Authority. The head master is present at the meetings and is consulted on matters which require his help and advice.

Premises and Equipment

The premises have been modified to meet the needs of a changed school, and alterations are still being carried out. The three-storey building has form-rooms, the library, practical rooms and dining accommodation on the ground floor, administration, the hall, the chapel, the gymnasium, one art room, dormitories and sick bay on the first floor, with laboratories, dormitories and resident staff rooms on the second floor. Being built at present are a new gymnasium with full facilities for changing and showers, and a new geography room. Proposed by the head master, but not yet sanctioned, are three conversions, of the present gymnasium to two laboratories, of an old dormitory to four form-rooms, and of a masters' study to an extension of the library. Further developments will depend on the future size of the school. If this is established as a three-form entry, there would appear to be enough overall accommodation for the necessary adaptations to be made.

The major needs are a library of adequate size, a room for technical drawing, division rooms for sixth-form groups and storage facilities for art and craft. The present form-rooms have the great disadvantage that they are divided by glass and wood partitions which do not exclude noise. Some rooms have poor artificial lighting and all are in need of repair and redecoration.

Outside, the first essential is to recondition the sanitary offices for day boys, which are in a disgraceful state. The playing area on the school site would be greatly improved if the worn-out grass were replaced by a shale surface and if the hard-surfaced playground were repaired and better drained.

On the question of premises it should be said that the Governors have recently spent a very large sum of money on pointing the building and on improvements to the heating system.

Equipment is, in general, satisfactory, but some replacements and additions are desirable. Blackboards are inadequate in size and of poor quality, there is a serious shortage of display-boarding in form-rooms, and many desks are too small for the boys occupying them. Further equipment is needed for science and mathematics, for handicraft and technical drawing, and for pottery. Books are needed too for English and mathematics on the modern side, and for music throughout the school.

Library

The Old Blues' Memorial library of over 5,000 volumes (2,000 fiction, 2,800 non-fiction and 200 pure reference) is housed in a most attractive room of some 500 square feet, well furnished with oak tables and high shelving. All concerned look after the library very well indeed but, as it is very crowded, it is proposed to press into service a similar room on the floor above for the older boys. As both rooms are small the only happy solution would be to find a big room if the library is to play its proper part in the life and work of the school. The present room could be kept as a reading room and study; racks could be obtained to display newspapers and the very good magazines which are provided.

The master in charge has the help of a library prefect with accessions and stock-taking and ten librarians work in pairs for half an hour daily at 4 p.m. Fiction is arranged alphabetically by authors and catalogued under both title and author. The non-fiction section is classified under a modified Dewey system but is not so far catalogued. A selection of books is displayed outside the library and lists of recent additions are posted in the form rooms. Small exhibitions are held inside or outside the library; at the time of the inspection it was a collection of Roman coins. The income on a per capita basis is some £120 per annum, with additional donations, benefactions and purchases through subject allowances. Suggestions for books are made by both staff and boys. The library is open for reference and study purposes to small groups or individuals from the Sixth Form and in the evening it is regularly used by boarders. If a much bigger room were available more training could be given in the use of the school library to junior forms. At the time of the inspection only 108 books, including 32 fiction, were on loan, although there are other works of fiction available for day boys and boarders. Space could be found for more volumes in the present room if some old, outdated books were discarded. Certain sections need building up, including mathematics, hobbies and sports, careers and the newly-introduced Spanish.

Staff

In addition to the head master there are twenty assistant masters, three of whom have staff houses and nine others are resident and perform boarding duties. Six masters teach on the grammar side only, three on the modern side only and eleven have assignments

which involve teaching both selective and non-selective pupils. The age range of the masters is well spread, but a large number of them, eight in all, were appointed in 1960 or 1961. Amongst this group are a number of young, inexperienced men who need help and guidance. The head master takes upon himself the responsibility for this oversight, but he should be able to share the burden with some of the older and more experienced men, especially those who are heads of departments. Staff and departmental meetings, regularly held, would be one of the ways of dealing with this problem.

Except in mathematics, where an additional full-time specialist is required, the subjects are well covered by the various masters. Though the staff is not academically distinguished, there is a good general level of teaching competence throughout and some are teachers of real merit. Moreover some of the recent appointments show signs of promise: weaknesses are due, in the main, to the inexperience of beginners. It is much to the credit of the school that the staff contains a number of men who unstintingly give of their time and energy to the many out-of-school activities that involve both day-boys and boarders. Their contribution to the life of the community is indeed a most valuable one.

At the centre is the head master, who has been involved in the life of the school since 1926, first as an assistant, and since 1945 as its head. Without him the school might not be what it now is: it has certainly made progress in the last fourteen years. He has shown foresight in planning the stages of its development, remarkable perseverance in the face of countless difficulties, and he has felt a sense of personal responsibility for it, for the school has been, and still continues to be, his life-work. The time is coming, however, when he will have set it on a firm basis and he should be able to relax from the strain of the past years and begin to rely upon others to help him with its administration and pastoral care.

Organisation, Curriculum and Standards of Work

At the present time the 157 boys on the modern side are organised in five forms, one in each year. Twenty eight boys are over the age of 15 years and nineteen of these are in the fifth-year group. Most of the fifth-year boys will sit for the examination set by the Union of Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes which was introduced into the school in 1960; but a very small number are preparing instead for the General Certificate of Education examination, and they work with the selective pupils. The boys on the modern side have a curriculum which includes the usual subjects throughout, with variations, at certain stages, in the provision made for handicraft.

There are eight selective forms, 260 boys in all, one form in each of the first, third and fifth years, two in the second and fourth, and a sixth form. The 13+ entry of 1959 is now in the fourth year of the school; but, by agreement with the Local Education Authority and the parents, the head master put the 1960 13+ entry into the second year, thus giving the boys a four-year course to the General Certificate of Education examination, instead of a three-year course. There are thirty boys in the sixth form, seventeen in the first year and thirteen in the second year. Numbers are overlarge in some of the forms, but it is understood that this will in future be avoided.

The curriculum for the first year includes French, Latin and woodwork in addition to the normal form subjects. The A-stream in the second year continues with this curriculum: the B-stream has Spanish instead of French and Latin. In the third year options are Spanish or art or metalwork; in the fourth year A-stream, history or religious instruction, Spanish or art or metalwork, Latin or geography, chemistry and physics or chemistry with physics; and in the fourth year B-stream, art or music or metalwork. Alternatives for the fifth year are slightly different, Latin or art, history or religious instruction, physics and chemistry or physics with chemistry and metalwork. For the General Certificate of Education examination no boy is entered for less than three subjects, and as many as eight may be taken. If boys are found to be well below the standard required for this examination, they are allowed to sit for that of the Union of Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes: the number of such boys is usually three or four.

Sixth form pupils take two or three Advanced level subjects, and at the moment almost any combination of these is possible. Biology can only be offered through the courtesy of another grammar school and a local technical college which the boys attend for tuition. Pupils in the lower sixth have in addition to their Advanced level subjects current affairs, art and music, and they prepare for the General Paper. Both they and the boys in the upper sixth are now having a much appreciated and valuable course in metalwork and workshop practice.

On the modern side the course is well-balanced and the introduction of an external examination would appear to be serving a useful purpose. For the boys in selective streams the head master has been skilful in giving them options both below and at sixth form level. Some minor points for consideration are a course of music for all boys, some study of both English and science for all sixth form pupils, and an increase in the time allowance for languages and, in the sixth form, for mathematics.

It is encouraging to find very good work in art, science and metalwork. Other subjects where the general standard is good or where developments can be expected are religious instruction, history, geography, modern languages and some aspects of English. Weaknesses are to be found in Latin and in some subjects where the least-able masters are sharing in the teaching. The presentation of the written work could, in general, be improved. Standards vary with different masters and, in some cases where deterioration has taken place, an insistence on neater, tidier work would soon effect an improvement.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

A master with a teaching certificate and experience in secondary modern schools in England and at a teacher-training centre abroad is responsible for religious instruction. Forms have either one or two periods a week for the subject except those taking it in the external examination as an alternative to history: these boys have three periods.

A carefully planned scheme of work is prefaced by a thoughtful statement of what the master is seeking to do and how he hopes to achieve his aims. The scheme also includes a comprehensive list of Bible versions, text-books, reference books and film strips.

The scheme for the first three years includes Old and New Testament study for each year, and covers the history of Israel from Abraham to Solomon and the life and teaching of Jesus from the Synoptic Gospels. In the fourth and fifth years the examination groups are concerned with the Acts of the Apostles and selected passages from the Epistles. At present there is little work on the second half of the Old Testament, an omission to be rectified in the future. Sixth-form studies are based on topics selected and discussed by the master and the boys.

The school is fortunate to have a master who, although without specialist qualifications, is deeply immersed in his subject and gives a great deal of time and thought to it. His own enthusiasm and his personal impact on the boys are such that he finds no difficulty in imparting his message to them. At times his enthusiasm tends to carry him away and he fails to give the boys sufficient opportunity to play their part in the lessons: but when the boys are encouraged to ask questions and to make observations, they do so freely, and some lively and interesting oral work ensues. Bible study plays a most important part in the work and a variety of versions are regularly used for illustration and elucidation. Maps, pictures and film strips are brought into play at appropriate times. A devoted Scripture group meets regularly out of school hours under the leadership of the master.

All these aspects of the work are closely related to the morning services in hall and in chapel; and the religious life of the school owes much to the influence of both the head master and his assistant.

ENGLISH (GRAMMAR FORMS)

One master is responsible for all the English except that of the two forms of late transfer. As he has only been at the school for just over a year, he has still to make his full impact on the work, but already certain aspects of it show the mark of his particular interests. He is well assisted by a newly appointed master who also teaches Spanish.

A comprehensive and carefully planned scheme of work gives detailed information of the work to be covered each year with an indication of the teacher's aims and methods. From the evidence of this scheme, it would appear that language, in its strictest sense, occupies the principal place in the teaching and that the study of literature follows behind. Although this evidence was in a measure confirmed by a scrutiny of the pupils' exercise books, in which there was a tendency to emphasise linguistic exercises at the expense of other types of written work, it was encouraging to find that the master's great contribution in class lay in his ability to fire his pupils with a love of literature, whether in the form of the novel, the play or the poem. It was from literature that the boys were getting inspiration and were learning to appreciate the value of what our greatest writers have to offer. If this work in the classroom can be extended to include a greater emphasis on the boys' private reading, in large measure dependent on the development of the School library, the English course as a whole will be enriched.

The importance of oral work is recognised in the course and the boys are encouraged to read aloud, to debate and to discuss. Some lively work of this nature was heard in a junior form, and it gives an indication of what may well be developed at later stages in the school, where some boys need to be helped to achieve clarity of speech and the concise expression of ideas.

Reference has already been made to the balance of written exercises done by the boys. Constant practice in the execution of language exercises achieves success in the external examination and the master is anxious to maintain the standard; but this is done at the expense, at the moment, of other forms of writing. The carry-over of the valuable work done in literature should find expression in the boys' writing. Some excellent examples of what can be achieved are to be found in some boys' books, but the opportunities are too few.

Three boys in the first year of the Sixth Form are preparing for the external examination at Advanced level and have just been launched on their course. They are working well, are beginning to read widely and are benefiting from the master's enjoyment of his subject. They have done little written work so far and should now begin to have some regular practice in writing.

ENGLISH (MODERN FORMS)

Forms 1M, 2Ma, 4M and 5M are taken for English by the experienced master who is responsible for the modern department. His scheme is conventional and maintains a reasonable balance between reading and writing, intake and output. The quality of the literature could be enriched by including suitable full-length books in place of some of the abridged editions and miscellanies on which part of the work is based. Poetry might be used more generously to influence speech and a feeling for language; and a bolder attitude could be taken towards memorisation. The weekly compositions, which are faithfully written by the above forms, show steady improvement in accuracy and presentation; here and there, flashes of inspiration light up the phraseology, but the general impression is more of exercise than excitement. Both spoken and written English could be enlivened if purpose and individuality were consciously sought, and if the techniques so carefully taught were exploited to interesting ends.

Boys in their fourth and fifth years pay regular visits to the local branch of the public library and keep records of their reading, a stimulating practice which could profitably be extended. At present, few boys on the modern side use the school library, and signs of its impact on their English are hard to find. Training in independent enquiry and writing could begin at an earlier stage and extend to allied subjects such as history and geography.

Literature in forms 2Mb and 3M is imaginatively presented by the two masters concerned. They have recently joined the staff and have yet to establish good standards of written work which can only come through sterner self-criticism by the boys and thorough correcting by the masters.

HISTORY (GRAMMAR FORMS)

History is obligatory for the first three years; in the fourth year it becomes optional to religious instruction. The work for the Ordinary level examination is dealt with in two years; some boys drop this subject in the fifth year after a trial Ordinary level examination, and some boys may take the Union of Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes' examination instead of the Ordinary level examination. Each of the classes seen illustrated the rather complex structure of the school, but each class in fact seemed to be a perfectly workable and cohesive group. Two boys are at present reading history in the sixth form, where they can and do receive a great deal of individual attention.

There is no history room and the classrooms in which history is taught are very inadequately equipped: there are no display spaces, blackboards are inadequate in size and in poor condition, and there are no bookshelves and no storage space. In these most discouraging conditions history is being taught very well by a young master, a graduate of Durham University, who was appointed in 1960. He is treating this year as exploratory, during which he is forming his ideas about a new syllabus which he hopes to introduce at the beginning of the next academic year. There is every promise that this will be a very interesting and stimulating syllabus, and it is to be hoped that the material conditions of the teaching will improve to support him properly and satisfactorily. Nevertheless, he is already initiating new approaches and some middle-school project works were seen to be progressing most satisfactorily on the days of the inspection.

The history section of the library is most pleasingly satisfactory, and well arranged and cared for. The library is also well supplied with reference books, magazines and journals and during the time of the inspection an interesting exhibition of Roman coins had been mounted. This most pleasant room must be a great help to the senior boys reading history and to the master in charge.

HISTORY (MODERN FORMS)

The history lessons in the first four years are sheer entertainment in the best sense of the word. A chronological history of England is imaginatively unfolded in vivid word-pictures which have so captured the imagination of the boys that they have been inspired to original writing of an uncommon order. Lively discussion and questioning continue in some lessons beyond the allotted time; the same involvement is evident in the boys' note-books which are a judicious blend of factual and imaginative accounts, forming a coherent and cumulative record of vicarious historical experiences.

The fifth form is reading social and economic history for an external examination; though the content is less dramatic than political history, it has nevertheless appealed strongly to these boys; they are well grounded in the material they have studied, and apply themselves diligently to the course.

GEOGRAPHY (GRAMMAR FORMS)

Three lessons a week are available for most forms and five in the sixth form, with the lower and upper divisions combined for two more periods. The work was seen at a difficult stage as a new

geography room is now being made and all lessons are held in the ordinary, bare classrooms with none of the essential teaching aids and no opportunities for practical work. The master in charge is keen, has a thorough grasp of his subject and the boys are eager to seek information from him and to contribute to the discussions. He makes excellent use of the blackboard for lucid summaries and sketch maps. A little field work is carried out on youth hostel tours organised by the master. Written work could be better marked and from the older boys more individual exercises could be demanded, involving private enquiries into a more varied range of topics.

GEOGRAPHY (MODERN FORMS)

The master who takes the first four years is new to teaching. He is trying hard to win the interest of the boys and is succeeding with a few of them, but his classes contain many passive and one or two active resisters who are content to get by with as little effort as possible. The work closely follows a text-book; the written exercises consist mainly of summaries of lessons. Despite the gallant persistence of the master, the geographical content of the course is slight, and quite lacking in independent thought and practical application.

The fifth form is diligently working through a syllabus for the Union of Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes' examination, in company with a geographer who knows their needs and supplies them not only with factual knowledge but some understanding of underlying principles. These boys are keen and though their writing is too often slipshod, they are moving steadily ahead on a narrow front.

MODERN LANGUAGES

French is taught for only four periods a week up to the fifth forms, an insufficient allowance to cover all the skills involved and to allow time for reading. The master in charge, who holds a good honours degree, has been here for some four years. He is an energetic and enthusiastic teacher and has very good classroom relationships with the boys, who work extremely well. Written work, good in quality and quantity, is regularly set, well marked and appraised. There is very great use of French in the classrooms and the boys understand and respond very well, having an excellent attitude to work. Successful visits abroad are arranged which are stimulating the work; the dull rooms could well reflect some of this interest.

The fluent oral work would be improved by greater purity of vowels and intonation; the use of a good tape recorder would help both boys and master in this task. A French assistante, here for some six hours a week, is doing good work in French conversation with small groups. It would be better if the room used had a blackboard and some pictorial matter to provide French background. There is at present only one boy in the sixth form who is studying French.

Spanish is studied by forms 4 G.A., 4 G.B., 3 G. and 2 G.B. for four or five lessons a week. The subject was recently introduced and was first intended as a three-year course to the external examination at Ordinary level, but the present 3 G. and 2 G.B. are on a four-year course. The newly-appointed master responsible for

most of the work has an excellent Spanish pronunciation and oral work in the foreign tongue is a distinctive feature of the lesson. He is a clear teacher who maintains a good pace. Forms 4 G.B. and 2 G.B. consist largely of boys who entered the school at the age of 13 and Spanish is giving these boys good help in finding their feet, although 4 G.B. is not an able class. Progress in 3 G. and 2 G.B. is good as it also is in 4 G.A., which is well taught by the French master. More short simple free compositions could be attempted at an earlier stage to lend variety to the work and give boys facility in self-expression on restricted lines. The rooms used for Spanish could be more attractive centres for teaching.

LATIN

To provide adequately for Latin in a one-form entry organisation is extremely difficult and attempts to do so have not, under existing circumstances, proved successful, so that the head master has decided to reconsider the whole matter. At present, in the first year an introductory course of two periods a week has been provided, followed by four periods each year for the ensuing two years. Up to this stage all boys study Latin, but thereafter it is an optional subject, alternative to geography, with three and then four periods a week, and only ten boys are involved in the two years. There is no sixth form work.

The master in charge, who also teaches some history, is a Latin graduate in his first post, to which he was appointed in 1952. His teaching methods have failed to interest the boys in the subject and have given them no feeling of competence. He has not made the most of the opportunity in the two periods of the first year to arouse boys' interests in either Greece or Rome, as a background to embarking on the course itself in the following year; and his concentration on purely language work, chiefly the exercise of translating English sentences into Latin, has led to distaste and dissatisfaction. There is little evidence that the boys have any secure foundation of grammar, homework books are full of corrected exercises the originals of which appear to have been done in rough only, and the course is too narrowly conceived.

If it is to continue, the approach should be radically rethought and new methods employed which would give satisfaction and a sense of achievement.

MATHEMATICS

In all, six masters take some part in the teaching of this subject. On the whole, they lack outstanding academic qualifications for their task, though the responsible master included mathematics in his science degree, and a second master graduated in science. Both graduates specialise in mathematics, the former devoting full time to grammar forms, and the latter providing a desirable bridge between the two sides. They give a sound lead, providing experienced, steady and progressive teaching, leading boys to think mathematically and, in the main, succeeding in cultivating a reasonable mathematical style.

For the first five years the time allowance for all classes is suitable and the lessons are well distributed. The grammar streams follow a course directed to the older type of papers set in the external examination at the Ordinary level. The present slight

statement of the scheme of work could be expanded with advantage. Satisfactory progress is made, and this is maintained in the sixth form, though at a slower pace than would be possible with a more generous allocation of working periods, and if partial separation of the upper and lower forms were possible for those studying further mathematics. There are, moreover, almost no reference volumes on this subject provided in the school library. However, the work done is creditable, and the senior boys respond well to the increased individual responsibility placed upon them.

The complete picture of the modern side is less satisfactory. Form 2 M is split into halves for this work and each of these groups, as well as each of the other forms, is consistently taught by one master. Consistency of purpose and practice, however, are not easy to discern in the teaching. One or two masters are inexperienced and are in need of much more help. The syllabus, as drafted, is quite out of date; it lacks both breadth and practical significance. Additional texts, more modern in outlook, are needed, and it is strongly recommended that a room be set aside for development along specialist subject lines. In present circumstances it is not surprising that the written work is of an unusually patchy quality, but it is pleasing to record that boys in the fifth form, most of whom will sit an external examination, work with seriousness and interest.

Regular departmental meetings could contribute constructively to future progress in this subject and, as circumstances permit, the appointment of a specialist master able to share the sixth form work is clearly desirable.

SCIENCE

The markedly good results achieved in recent years in chemistry and physics stem from the capable and unremitting work of the head of the department, who teaches the bulk of the chemistry on the grammar side, and of his specialist colleague responsible for physics. Both are honours graduates and are thoughtful teachers, up-to-date in professional knowledge and outlook. They are supported by two non-graduate masters. One of these, a newcomer, shares the physics and chemistry on both sides of the school. He works with vigour and intensity of purpose, and is making headway in the essential process of adjusting approach and method to boys of different types; the other, who mainly specialises in another subject, is not yet technically well-equipped for this work, but shows much interest in it.

Two laboratories have been brought into use, and have been improved in various ways from time to time, but neither has been systematically planned and equipped for all the demands now made upon it. These demands continue to grow: already twenty-three science lessons have to be taken in classrooms each week; moreover, only a minimal amount of biology is now taken by any class, but a latent need for it is becoming evident. When the proposal to provide two new laboratories by the conversion of the old gymnasium can be implemented, the accommodation and equipment should be reviewed as a whole. The science staff have greatly appreciated the recent appointment of a laboratory steward; with his help, the range of experimental work is continually being widened.

Separate schemes of work have been compiled for chemistry and physics. Both are well expressed, having regard for scientific method and seeking breadth of development. In the first two years, particularly, the two might, with advantage, be more fully integrated and presented with suitable work in biology. Pupils are genuinely interested in science; they respond well to the training given in laboratory work and in note-making. In physics, the sequence of topics might well be adjusted to accord with a concentric approach, and so ensure adequate variety each year. In both branches very good progress continues in the sixth form, where the boys mature, developing increased independence and practical resourcefulness. This year entries for the Advanced level examination total eleven in physics and eight in chemistry; in addition, two boys prepare to offer biology, obtaining tuition at other institutions.

Suitable schemes are outlined and are being worked out in great detail for the science of the modern side, but in treatment the biological content is not yet adequate. Several classes suffer from the current limitation of laboratory space, and hence of practical experience, and the written work of the boys is too uneven. In many cases, however, boys are gaining much from the work planned for them.

Regarded as a whole, the department is undoubtedly surmounting its several difficulties with determination and energy; it is making a valuable contribution to the boys' education and to the school's academic success.

MUSIC

All five forms on the modern side have one or two periods a week for music, but only the first two years on the grammar side have form-lessons; thereafter, music on this side is confined to the one or two boys in each of the fourth, fifth and sixth years who are offering music as an examination subject, and to a form-period of appreciation for the lower sixth.

The master, who is a widely-read and accomplished musician, came only at the beginning of the school year. His personal inclinations and his pianistic ability have influenced his manner of presentation and his choice of material which so far has been heavily biased towards musical theory, literature and history. These he puts over very well, though sometimes at too great length for the less musically-minded on the modern side. The great lack is music-making, choral or instrumental, by the boys themselves. Only by their making music will their theory make sense. A school such as this must contain a rich lode of choral material ready for the tapping. First movements to discover this were made last term when a choir performed selections from "Messiah" as part of a series of monthly Sunday evening concerts instituted by the master, and this has been followed by instrumental and vocal recitals by visiting artists. But a more general and direct involvement is needed as a natural part of the musical education of all the boys, starting with a four-part choir and four-part congregational singing in the chapel, and leading to the regular performance of major works.

Already, the master is revising his first draft of the syllabus. He is short of song-books and vocal scores, but once these arrive and become part of the course, time should be found for all boys to include music as part of their education.

A string class, under the tuition of a visiting master, has just been formed and should make, in time, the nucleus of a school orchestra. Everything is in embryo at the moment, but the personal and physical factors are conducive to healthy growth, and the eventual outcome could and should be prodigious.

ART AND CRAFT

Art and craft activities of a very high order are being developed. The master responsible teaches the boys of the grammar stream. A second master, appointed over a year ago, teaches the boys of the modern stream. The time allocation is satisfactory, although the additional single periods are of little value for practical work; they are best used in the upper school for the purpose of lectures and discussions, ideally illustrated by means of a projector or epidiascope. The art room cannot fail to stimulate the imagination through its exceptionally interesting display of finished work, which includes designs, paintings and experiments in three-dimensional form. The scheme is an unusual one which encourages an individual and serious approach. It is planned to provide training in observation and appreciation of materials, and to give all the boys a sense of achievement through their own efforts. It is a pity that the vast range of materials is stored in the room when there is space for an adjacent store. The craft room is underneath the present gymnasium and the noise caused by physical education activities causes considerable disturbance. Here again there is no store, but a pottery section has been arranged in its place. This would be further improved by the provision of another wheel and kiln and a few modelling stands. The room itself needs a sink and, like the art room, it has inadequate artificial lighting. It would be advisable for the second master to consider the development of a different though complementary range of activities. He can arrange to provide facilities for pottery and modelling (already showing promise), casting, carving in plaster, wood and stone and for mosaic work. The imaginative approach to design and colour, which is so commendable in this school, can readily be applied to an extended scheme for the boys of the modern forms, and a different approach to painting, bringing in representational work, might well be successful.

HANDICRAFT

Handicraft comprises woodwork for 1 G and all second-year forms and metalwork for the A and B forms of the third, fourth and fifth years, with a special course for the sixth form. The Union of Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes' examinations in handicraft are taken by the boys of the modern side, but a few boys take Ordinary level in the General Certificate of Education examination and the exceptional boy may go on to Advanced level.

Metalwork was introduced into the school only four years ago and its development has been the concern of the then woodwork master, appointed in 1949: additionally, responsibility for handicraft generally rests with him as head of department. Under his charge handicraft is never static: conditions are reviewed and revised to meet current needs, emphasis is shifted to keep in step with educational thought and development and new territory is explored.

Two workshops are provided; one, that for woodwork, has an area of almost 1,400 sq.ft.. It is well equipped with hand-tools and with a circular saw, a planer and a lathe, but there is an urgent need for a better powered-grindstone. Some rearrangement is intended in this shop which should make for greater convenience and easier class management. The metalwork shop is especially well equipped with lathes, ancillary machine-tools and bench and hammered-metalworking tools in wide variety, but smithing conditions need to be improved. This workshop, too, is to be reorganised completely, and if all goes to plan should benefit greatly from the changes proposed.

The master concerned with woodwork is standing in for a year for the regular master during his absence on a course. Because he is working on a temporary basis he is following the set scheme of work he found in use and is doing so ably and confidently; his concern for techniques rather than imaginative and enterprising work is understandable and may well be inherited, too. Standards of workshop discipline and craftsmanship are very good: they are requisite conditions for success with new work which may make greater educational demands on the boy, but any change of approach should await the return of the regular master.

Metalwork is making a vivid impact on the school, for not only are techniques well taught in variety and to high standards, but they are being applied with thought and to good purpose. The most significant example of this is the making of scientific equipment which includes a ballistic balance, heat expansion and torsion apparatus. Hammered metalwork and machine work are to be extended considerably, and equipment for this is being made. An innovation worthy of note is that by which all boys of the sixth form follow an experimental course in the theory and practice of engineering, whether their leanings be towards the arts or the sciences. It is a non-examination study involving some workshop practice but more concerned with technology and certain aspects of mechanical drawing. The course has made an excellent start and promises well.

Technical Drawing is taken by one form only - 5M - and is examined as part of the Union of Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes' practical test and not as a separate subject. Only two periods a week are allowed, so that with so late a start and with such a restricted time allocation little understanding of the subject can be gained and only undistinguished standards of draughtsmanship reached. At one time forms 3M and 4M also took drawing: a return to this arrangement would be a progressive step, provided that a drawing office were available. The subject is most capably taught and it has undoubted potential.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

A young master in his first year of teaching following attendance at a supplementary course is responsible for physical education. On the games' side he has the assistance of seven other members of staff including the head of the physics department who has taken great interest in school games for several years.

In gymnastics the boys respond well and make effective use of available equipment. When the work is transferred to the new gymnasium now in course of erection, it will be possible to arrange

a more varied and challenging programme of work thereby making more appropriate demands on the boys' skill, initiative and judgment. It will also be possible to develop basketball for which, at present, only outdoor stands are available, and to expect all boys to use shower baths regularly.

The area of the main playing field a few minutes' walk from the school has been increased by securing the use of the adjoining field with its pleasant changing rooms. Association football, athletics, cricket and baseball form the chief field activities with opportunities also for some lawn tennis. The boys are interested in their games; they would benefit if coaching had a definite place in the games scheme. The greatest single need is for better practice and match pitches for cricket.

Swimming lessons are arranged for all boys during the summer term but for the modern stream only in winter. Slightly fewer than two thirds of the boys qualify as swimmers by the time they reach the fourth forms. A very successful life-saving club is organised by the master responsible for religious instruction.

Corporate Life

The school is a vigorous community with a wide range of activities, shared by boys and masters alike. These activities are enjoyed by boarders and day-boys, and by boys in selective and non-selective streams, for it has been the head master's determination to create and maintain a single community whose life all may share. At the heart of this he would place the spiritual life of the school, exemplified by the morning services, conducted by himself or by the deputy headmaster. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays these are held in the school chapel, for grammar and modern boys on alternate days, and in the hall for the whole school on the remaining days of the week. Closely associated with this, and run by the master who gives religious instruction, is the Scripture Union group which has a strong membership. There is a wide range of other activities which interest boys, from the music and dramatic societies to chess and bridge, photography and radio. Sports of all kinds are well represented in the school calendar and there are Scouts and Cadets. School journeys and visits abroad are regularly made: there is a flourishing magazine, and a strong "Old Blues Society" exists, which supports all that the school undertakes. The part that masters play in organising and helping to run these societies cannot be too highly praised.

In school itself there are a head day boy and a head boarder, prefects and sub-prefects and boarding prefects who work closely in association with the master responsible for the boarding house. Four school houses, each with its house-master, compete for games. The appearance and behaviour of the senior boys is indeed a credit to the school and their influence must be felt in the community as a whole. The general attitude to work and the behaviour of boys in lesson times is, in most cases, very acceptable; the boys appear friendly and co-operative. Outside classroom hours, however, there is a certain amount of roughness, and evidence for this can be found in the lack of care given to premises and equipment. More stringent supervision by those on duty is sometimes called for.

The Boarding Arrangements

The matron in charge of the catering and domestic arrangements has been at the school since 1939. She has a resident assistant matron, and two non-resident assistants, one of whom is her deputy. The four matrons supervise all meals and the bathing and bedtime arrangements of the younger boys.

The boarders sleep in dormitories according to their ages. In the senior dormitories partitions have been erected to give some privacy for the older boys; the head boy has a single room and a group of ten senior boys occupy a former sick bay. A resident master occupies a study bedroom adjacent to each dormitory. Conditions in the dormitories are very satisfactory.

The sick bay is adjacent to the senior matron's own living accommodation. It consists of a junior and senior dormitory with toilet and bathroom facilities. There is no day room for convalescent boys but a room adjacent to the senior isolation room might be used for this purpose. The doctor pays a routine visit to the school each day, and morning and evening surgeries are held in a room on the ground floor.

The boys help to keep their own dormitories clean and tidy, and they assist in the dining-room at breakfast and tea-time.

The care of the boys' clothes is in the hands of a resident sewing matron, who is assisted by two daily women. The older boys keep their clothes in their own cubicles or rooms, but the clothing of the younger boys is kept centrally. Some laundry is dealt with on the premises, and the rest is sent out to a local laundry. The daily routine is a satisfactory one, and there are ample opportunities for boys to foster their own interests in the evenings and at weekends. A library, rooms for television, films, radio and trains are amongst the indoor facilities provided. Visits and outings are regularly arranged, and the boys have a very full and varied life.

The School Meal

The original kitchen and diningroom of the old hospital are still in use. The premises are large and adequate heavy equipment has been installed. Some improvements were suggested to ease work and to save time. The dining tables have scrubbed wooden tops: they are laid with a minimum of cutlery and other table appointments.

All the kitchen staff are non-resident and work on a shift system. As neither the senior cook nor any of her assistants has been trained, suggestions were made for providing some overall supervision, so that a better service could be produced, especially at the mid-day meal.

Dining is for all boys at a single sitting. Masters sit at the ends of tables but they do not appear to make any contribution to the social aspects of the meal. The domestic staff, with the help of senior boys, are responsible for serving the food and clearing the tables. Although there is ample food, the meals in general lack variety and there are some deficiencies in the diet. This is

particularly so in the case of the boarders who need more fruit, fresh vegetables and milk. The present provision of separate food for masters at the tables is a matter for reconsideration.

Conclusion

The whole nature of the school has changed since 1947 and this is in no small part due to the devotion, foresight and unflagging efforts of the head master over many years. On the academic side it has developed: a sixth form has been established, with some strength on the science side, and the school is sending a number of boys each year to universities. It is providing a well-balanced curriculum for all except the least able pupils, and its social life is both vigorous and varied. It should, therefore, be possible, in the next few years, to see it grow as a full three-form entry school, of a highly individual character.

Appendix

NUMBERS AND AGES OF BOYS IN FORMS

*Number of Boys in the School whose
ages on 31st December, 1960, were*

<i>Form</i>	<i>Total No. of Boys</i>	<i>Average Age Y. M.</i>	<i>11 and under 12</i>	<i>12 and under 13</i>	<i>13 and under 14</i>	<i>14 and under 15</i>	<i>15 and under 16</i>	<i>16 and under 17</i>	<i>17 and under 18</i>	<i>18 and over</i>
IG	31	11 6	24	7	-	-	-	-	-	-
IIGA	35	13 2	-	27	8	-	-	-	-	-
IIGB	35	13 6	-	-	20	15	-	-	-	-
IIIG	36	14 0	-	-	27	9	-	-	-	-
IVGA	32	15 0	-	-	-	24	6	2	-	-
IVGB	24	15 4	-	-	-	12	9	3	-	-
VG	37	16 3	-	-	-	-	20	16	1	-
L6th.	17	17 4	-	-	-	-	-	9	4	4
U6th.	13	18 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	7
IM	31	12 1	18	13	-	-	-	-	-	-
IIM	40	13 0	-	30	10	-	-	-	-	-
IIIM	34	14 0	-	-	27	7	-	-	-	-
IVM	33	14 10	-	-	-	31	2	-	-	-
VM	19	15 11	-	-	-	-	14	5	-	-
Totals	417	-	42	77	92	98	51	35	11	11
Total number of Boarders.									125	

