

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLANNING.

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(MEMBER.)

ABSTRACT.

THE vitally important question of school planning is entering upon a new era. This is due to a growing dissatisfaction with existing models, and an increasing recognition of the need for housing children under better conditions during their school life.

For some years past architects have offered to authorities practically only one type of school, the central hall type, with a series of classrooms arranged round two or more sides of a central assembly hall. The calling for the submission of competitive designs from architects has, doubtless, been greatly responsible for the adoption of this type, to the exclusion of buildings of a more suitable character.

Whatever be the reason, it must be admitted that, in contrast with the originality and excellence of modern English architecture generally, school planning has tended to become so stereotyped that we find only one type of school building erected, in town and country alike, on the hillside and the plain indiscriminately, with little regard either to local conditions or educational requirements.

The advantages which may have been claimed for existing models are quite outweighed when consideration is given to the question of the children's health, and to the unsuitability of the buildings in relation to modern teaching methods and hygienic science.

The growing desire for healthier and better adapted schools has led, in a few instances, to the adoption and development of improved types of buildings, and noticeably so where city and county authorities have had the opportunity of consultation and investigation with their own official architects.

Plans of schools recently erected or in progress in Staffordshire and Derbyshire, and at Letchworth and Bradford, are illustrations of these newer types. In these improved schools a detached assembly hall is provided, adequate to meet the growing need for physical instruction, and the classrooms are so arranged as to enable them to be from time to time

flushed or scoured with fresh air, as well as at all times to be provided with cross-ventilation. In such schools children can be taught to love fresh air as Nature intended they should, instead of being compelled to sit in rooms with closed doors and windows, breathing impure air, many times fouled.

The provision of facilities for bathing in connection with these newer schools is a noticeable and welcome feature. Cleanliness should become a national virtue, and this can best be inculcated through the medium of school baths. Ideas of cleanliness learnt at school will be carried into the homes, and must have a far-reaching effect upon the rising generation.

Spray baths would appear to be the best type, with an occasional douche and slipper bath.

The regrettable amount of physical deterioration which is admitted to exist makes it highly desirable, if not even imperative, that open-air schools should be more extensively adopted, and the great benefits already derived from experimental open-air schools warrant their wider adoption. Far better that debilitated children should, through open-air schools, be given a chance to live and grow and develop, than that through inattention they should be allowed to drift into schools for the mentally defective, or otherwise become a burden to the ratepayers, possibly for life.

Open-air schools should provide resting sheds, classrooms, teaching verandahs, baths and dining hall, with well equipped kitchen quarters, and other offices. A school of this type just erected at Bradford will accommodate 120 scholars.

In a reflex way the principles embodied in the construction and working of open-air schools are tending to revolutionise school planning generally. Hitherto, school sites have often been selected without due thought being given to any consideration other than the cheapness of the land. Land which costs little in money, it should be remembered, is not always cheap. In future, the *suitability* of the site for the purpose to which it is to be applied will become, more and more, a determining consideration.

Then, in regard to construction, the floor area of classrooms should be graded to suit the scholars. To assume that what is suited to a child of six is equally suitable for one of twelve is an absurdity. In any case a classroom should not be arranged to accommodate more than 40. This should be a class limit.

A large, single window, without heavy mullions, and almost the full width of the classroom, gives the best light.

If more fresh air be introduced, naturally a larger heating surface will be required to warm the room. But it will be found that children

get used to the fresh air, and do not feel the cold so much if a plentiful supply is maintained.

Schools of the type illustrated practically ventilate themselves, and by their adoption some 30s. to £2 per scholar is to be saved on the central hall type, the latter requiring necessarily some mechanical means of ventilation to maintain anything like a reasonable standard of atmospheric purity. Cloak-rooms should be numerous rather than large; well lighted and ventilated, top-lighting being preferable, and effectively heated in cold or wet weather. The usual 6-in. space per scholar is too small an allowance, especially in the girls' school.

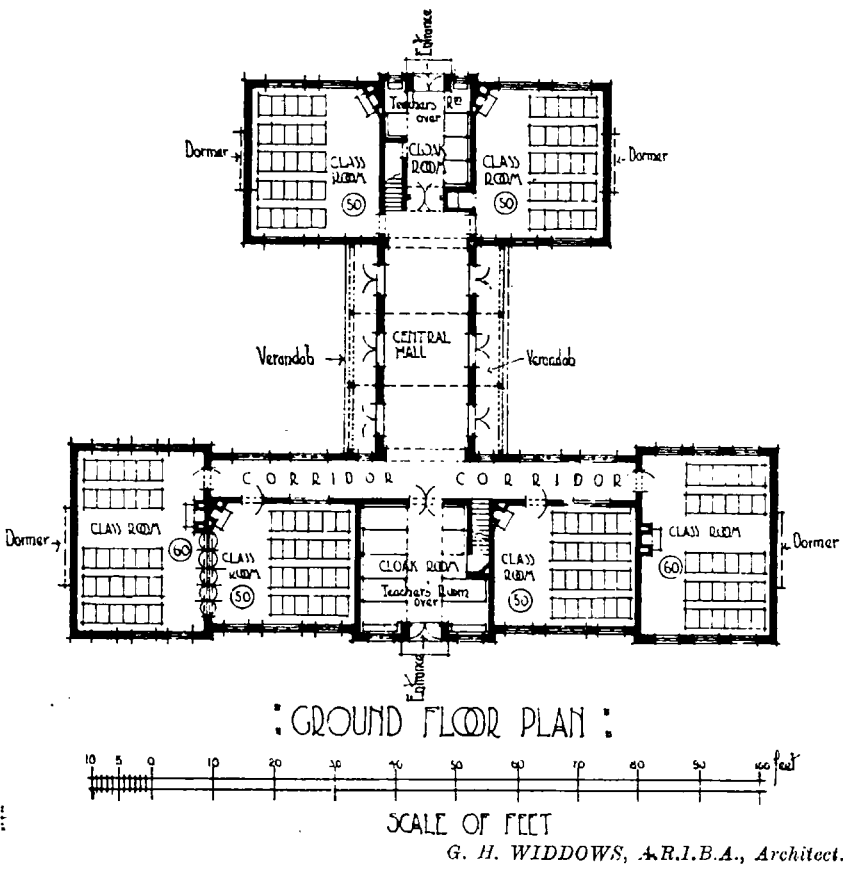
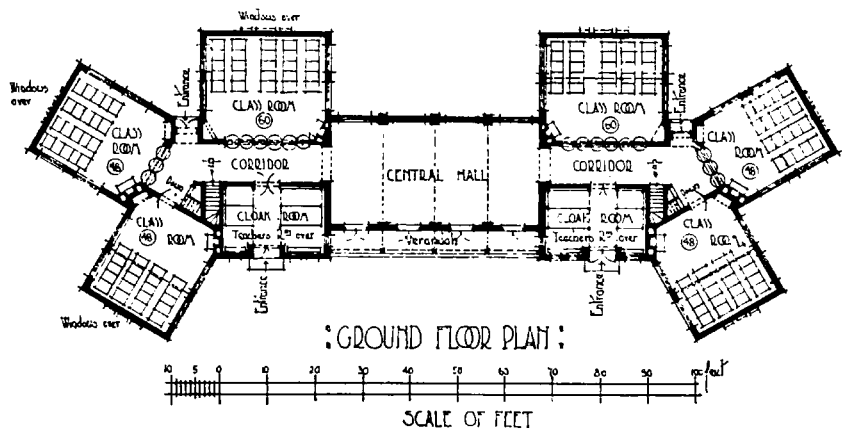
All new efforts in school planning should embody provisions to meet the varied requirements under the recent Acts instituting Medical Inspection in Schools and the Feeding of Necessitous Children.

Whilst these principles of school planning will be expanded as they become more assimilated, yet education authorities should not hesitate in adopting them, notwithstanding the fact that in some cases a somewhat larger initial outlay may be necessary. Where this is the case, however, it will soon be realised that the compensating advantages to teachers, and the increased physical and educational attainments of the scholars, will far outweigh the other and merely temporary consideration.

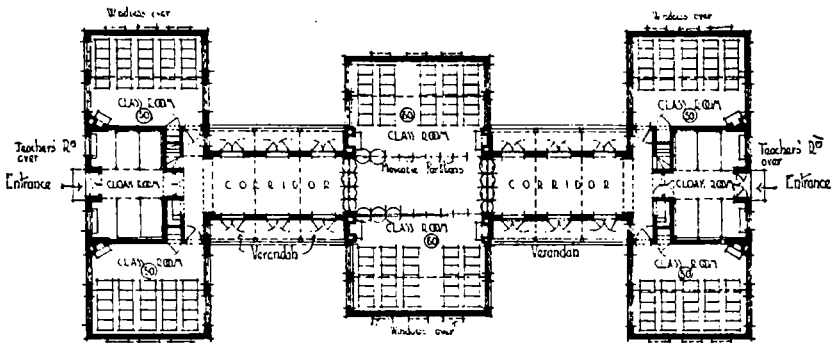
The justification for the adoption of such principles will not be confined to architects and authorities alone, but is sure to meet the approval of the nation at large. For what can be more supreme folly than to neglect the units of the race in the earlier stages of their development, only to be burdened with them at a later stage in life as physically stunted and mentally dwarfed inmates of asylums, hospitals, prisons, or workhouses.

DR. SIDNEY BARWISE (Derbyshire C.C.) said that to Dr. Reid (Staffordshire C.C.) was due more of the credit of killing the central hall type of school than to any other person. The medical inspection of school children had made it clear that the English people had no justification for setting themselves up as a clean race, for in some districts as many as 70 per cent. of the children attending elementary schools were found to be verminous. In the future, drill and domestic hygiene, including cookery, must find a larger place in the school curriculum, and this would modify the planning of the schools. The greatest drawback to the more recent schools was that the cloak-rooms were not sufficiently cut off. But on the whole the greater elasticity given by the Act of 1902 had enabled the architects of schools to plan buildings which must materially improve the health of the children, and he congratulated Mr. Kirkby on his share in this work.

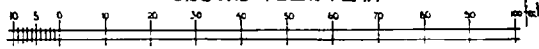
DERBYSHIRE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.



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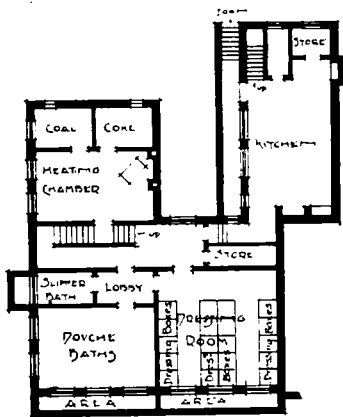
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



SCALE OF FEET

G. H. WIDDOWS, A.R.I.B.A., Architect.

UNDERCLIFFE SCHOOL, BRADFORD: New Infants Department.

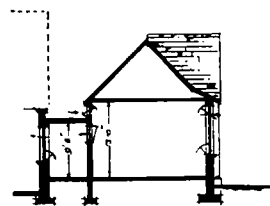


• BASEMENT PLAN •



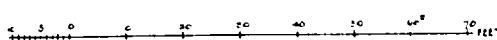
ELEVATION

SHOWING LARGE WINDOW

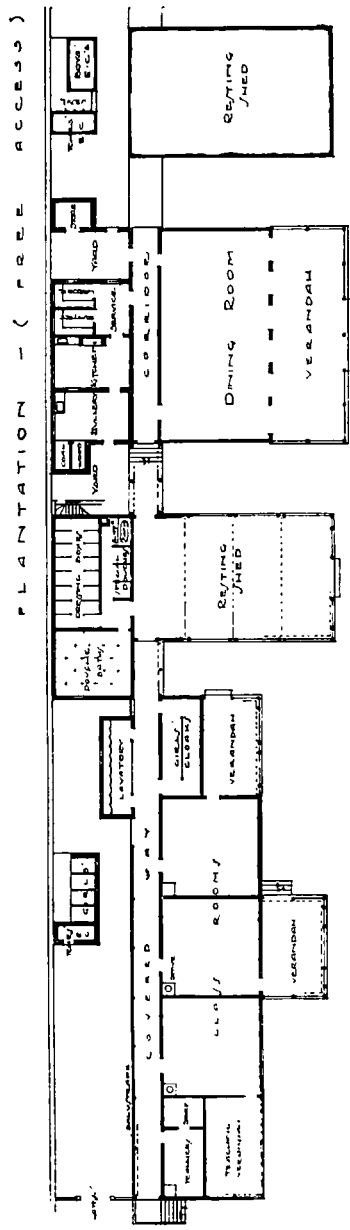


• SECTION •

SHOWING CROSS VENTILATION

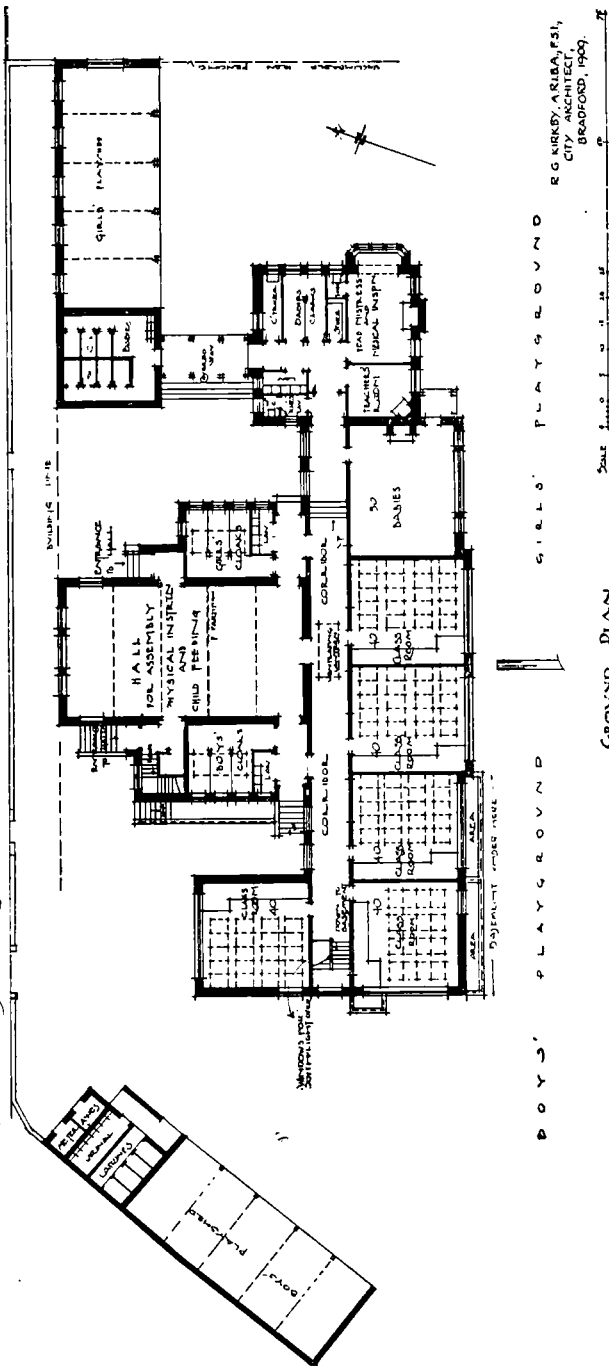


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BRADFORD 1909



CITY OF BRADFORD
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
OPEN-AIR SCHOOL
AT THACKLEY

CITY OF BRADFORD EDUCATION COMMITTEE.
UNDERCLIFFE SCHOOL.
NEW INFANTS' DEPARTMENT.



MERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL.
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
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