

Ten years have now elapsed since this school was first opened (10th March, 1880), and, as a site for the erection of a permanent institution has recently been purchased, and an adequate sum may be put on the parliamentary estimates to carry out the project of building, this may be considered an opportune time to inquire into the real worth of the work already done—not so much to assert in any way the right of our claim on the public purse as to bring evidence that, as an act of grace on the part of our legislators, the expenditure of some portion of the public income for this most humane branch of education is reasonable, expedient, and fully in accordance with the critical views of this enlightened age. To recur to facts then. Apart from the forty pupils now in the institution, there are thirty-one children who have been under the educational and moral influence of this school for a certain time, and are therefore old pupils. To obtain reliable information about these old pupils, I addressed letters to a number of their parents, inviting replies to the following simple queries: (1.) Does your son still make use of the spoken language, as he did when returning home from school? (2.) Do his brothers and sisters talk to him? (3.) Can he read the lips faster now than before? (4.) Is his education of permanent benefit to him? (5.) Is he employed at home or elsewhere, and are you satisfied with his work and conduct? (6.) Is he cheerful? (7.) If engaged in any occupation, please state the kind of employment, and what wages he earns. I append copies of all the replies received, and will deposit for a short time the original letters with the Secretary for Education.

The study of the condition of the blind, the deaf and dumb, and the imbeciles has recently been brought prominently before the notice of the British public by the publication, at Eyre and Spottiswoode's, 32, Abingdon Street, Westminster, London, of the report of the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb, &c. I recommend that our parliamentary library be supplied with a few copies of this report, and I desire to call the especial attention of the medical profession and others to paragraphs 20–29 of that report, on the causes of blindness, and remedial suggestions. The Commissioners' summary of recommendations on the education of the deaf and dumb I enclose as part of this report.

I have, &c.,

G. VAN ASCH.

The Hon. the Minister of Education, Wellington.

Enclosure 1 in No. 2.

EXTRACT FROM REPORT OF ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE BLIND, THE DEAF-AND-DUMB, ETC., OF THE UNITED KINGDOM.

Summary of Recommendations.

620. We recommend,—

1. That the provisions of the Education Acts be extended to the deaf and dumb, and power be obtained to enforce the compulsory attendance of children at a day-school or institution up to the age of sixteen.

2. That, where the number under any school authority is too small to form a class, or where the child is unable to attend an elementary school, the school authority should have the power, and be required, either to send a child to an institution or to board out such child under proper inspection, and to contribute to his education and maintenance such annual grants as would be equivalent to the contribution now allowed to be paid by Boards of Guardians; and, if there should be neither institution nor school available or willing to receive such child, the school authority should have the power, either by itself or in combination with other school authorities, to establish a school or institution for the purpose, and to educate such children, under proper inspection.

3. That, independently of the position of the parent, a capitation grant, not less than half the cost of the education of such child, with a maximum grant of £10, should be given for all in the same way as in ordinary elementary schools; and that the fees payable by necessitous parents should not exceed those payable in the case of ordinary children, but that in all cases parents should contribute according to their ability.

4. That the age of entry should, as far as possible, be seven; that pupils should, as a rule, be admitted only once a year; that the school attendance should be compulsorily enforced for at least eight years, without any existing limit of distance from school; and that power should be given to the local authority to pay the rail or tram fare of children when necessary.

5. That on admission the cause of deafness should be stated in the school register on the certificate of a medical practitioner.

6. That in all schools and institutions the general health, hearing, and sight of deaf children should be periodically inspected by a medical practitioner, and that those possessing some hearing capacity should be carefully and frequently examined, so as to test and improve their hearing, pronunciation, and intonation by mechanical means, such as ear-trumpets, &c.

7. That technical instruction in industrial handicrafts should be under the Education Department, as part of the curriculum in schools for the deaf and dumb after the age of twelve or thirteen, and that this training be continued to sixteen. After sixteen it may be left to institutions to apprentice their pupils or to send them to the technical or industrial schools provided for ordinary children.

8. That a special code for the deaf and dumb be issued, and that drawing, wood-carving, or modelling be made part of the regular curriculum of instruction for both sexes.

9. That every child who is deaf should have full opportunity of being educated on the pure oral system. In all schools which receive Government grants, whether conducted on the oral, sign and manual, or combined system, all children should be, for the first year at least, instructed on the oral system, and after the first year they should be taught to speak and lip-read on the pure oral system, unless they are physically or mentally disqualified, in which case, with the consent of the parents, they should be either removed from the oral department of the school or taught elsewhere.