Report on the Methods adopted in various Parts of the British Isles for the education of children suffering from defective vision due to Myopia or other causes (excluding the Blind).

The Council excludes from consideration those children who, on reaching adult life, will probably be economically blind, that is, "unable to do work for which sight is essential." In the opinion of the Council such children should be educated in schools for the blind.

The Council considers that special educational facilities are required for those who have defective vision, and for whom the ordinary school education is unsuitable, e.g., cases of progressive myopia, defective vision due to corneal opacities, congenital abnormalities, etc.

Classes which give the required facilities exist, and are termed by the Board of Education "schools for the partially blind." The Council thinks that this term is very undesirable; it gives offence to parents, and may leave a stigma detrimental to the child in after life. The term "myope class" is already in use, and connotes the purpose for which this form of education is designed. Such classes were established by the London Educational Authority in 1908. It has been found that the best interests of these children are served if such classes are held in association with elementary schools, because the oral teaching and physical exercises given in the ordinary classes are available for the children. By this system association is fostered between the defective-sighted and normal children.

As the children in these classes are of various ages and educational standards individual teaching is essential, and therefore, it has been found advisable to limit the number of children in each class.

The system of teaching by means of "myope classes" may seem to limit education so far as high scholastic attainment is concerned, but it has been found undesirable to encourage these children to follow a higher education, with the prospect of a sedentary occupation, thus incurring grave risks of serious breakdown later in life.

The Council has been informed that in London there are now forty-one "myope classes" providing accommodation for 915 children. In the rest of England, according to the latest information available (Report of Board of Education, 1924, list 42), there are four "myope schools," and provision for other
defective-sighted children is made in special classes and in schools for the blind.

With a view to obtaining further information a questionnaire was sent to ophthalmic surgeons practising in seventy-six areas of England, Scotland and Wales, excluding London, with the following results:

**QUESTIONS.**

1. Are the school children under the Educational Authorities of your district examined with regard to visual acuity, and those with defective sight systematically examined and treated by spectacles (when required) by a qualified ophthalmic surgeon?

2. The number of special schools for children with defective vision.

3. The number of classes for these children attached to:
   (a) Blind Institutions.
   (b) Ordinary Elementary Schools.

4. In country districts where there are not sufficient children to form a “myope class,” is any provision made for their education?

**RESULTS.**

All children are examined with regard to visual acuity. In nine areas no treatment is provided; in all others spectacles are ordered by an ophthalmic surgeon when required.

Sixteen such schools or classes exist in nine areas.

Seven are located in blind institutions. Nine are some form of special class or school. No special school or class is provided in sixty-seven areas.

In one area the children are sent to special educational centres.

In two areas teachers are trained in the principles involved in the education of myopes, and special desks, with blackboards attached, are provided.

In one area special instruction is given to head teachers.

In one area all children with high or increasing myopia are restricted in their work, the most seriously affected cases being excused school for varying periods, the teachers being advised about the kind of work which is suitable for them on their return.

The Council realizes that the inquiry has not been exhaustive, but considers that it demonstrates that, with a few notable exceptions, the provision for the education of the affected children is seriously inadequate.
It is obvious that in country districts where the number of defective-sighted children is insufficient to form special classes, some provision should be made either to send them to one of those classes in the nearest town or for their teachers to receive instruction in their management.

The Council strongly endorses the recommendation of the Departmental Committee on the Causes and Prevention of Blindness "that further provision should be made by education authorities for the education in myope classes or by similar methods for children with serious defects of vision requiring such facilities, and that steps should be taken to discover these cases at such an early age as will allow of preventive measures being adopted."

(Report of Department Committee, p. 53.)

The Council therefore recommends that:

(1) Children with defective sight should be examined periodically by an ophthalmic surgeon, who should prescribe the necessary treatment and educational regime.

(2) In all large centres of population special classes should be established for children with such defective sight as renders them unsuitable for ordinary school education. These classes should be associated with the ordinary elementary schools, and limited to a nominal roll of twenty children to each class.

(3) In country districts where there are not sufficient children to form a "myope class," instruction should be given to teachers and parents on the education and management of children with defective sight.

Parents and Local Care Committees should receive advice as to the choice of occupation for the children on leaving school.†

---

**ANNOTATION**

---

**Artificial Daylight**

The great advantages obtainable by the use of light, suitably altered to give results similar to daylight, both in commerce and the arts, have so far only been obtainable by two methods, both of which require a costly installation. In one of these the light is suitably modified by the use of screens, and in the other by

---

*The following pamphlets issued by the London County Council contain suitable instructions for teachers and parents:—

(a) Hints for Teachers of Myope Classes.

(b) Memorandum containing advice to Parents of short-sighted Children who have been recommended for admission to a Myope Class.

(c) Teaching of Children recommended by the Medical Officer for "Easy Treatment," "Oral Teaching Only," or to "Sit in the Front Row."

†See papers by Bishop Harman. *Proc. Roy. Soc. Med.*, 1915, Sec. of Ophthal., p. 120.