

Suggestions for observations in
Infant Schools - First Year Students

1. The District Near the School

Note any interesting features of the district, and look at the houses. Consider the district and houses as places in which children are growing up, and think about their suitability for this purpose. Are there places for children to play?

2. The School Building

When was the school built? How well has it been planned for its use as an infant school? What cloakroom, lavatory and washing facilities are there? Consider the good features of the old buildings, as well as those of the new.

3. The Children

Appearance Do they look suitably dressed and shod? Well-cared for and healthy? Is there any evidence of inadequate diet, too much food, too little sleep, forms of neglect or over-indulgence?

Individual Differences Note the children who wear glasses or a hearing-aid, who are left-handed. Note the comparative heights of the children in different classes. Note the thumb-suckers, nail-biters, face twitchers, particularly restless children.

Movement How do the children move about the classroom, around the school, in the playground? How skilfully can they negotiate steps, corners, stairs and other obstacles? How do they sit? Watch a particular child during a story lesson and note how often he changes his position.

Your P.E. Tutor will have suggested what you should look for in the P.E. lesson. Use these observations.

Speech How fluently do the children speak? To their own teacher, to you, peers? How wide is their vocabulary? Note their sentence construction.

Interests On no account will you intrude on the children's privacy or 'quiz' them. Most children are happy to confide in a friendly adult: respect their confidences and do not ever use childrens' names in any observation made.

What does he like to talk about? Is there any evidence of his ideas being influenced by television, books, stories, parents? Has he other ways of showing his interests, such as in his paintings, drawings, handwork, written-work, daily diary, news book, imaginative play in the classroom or playground?

Friends Has he a friend? Is he a member of a group? Does he choose to be with or near any particular child when he has opportunity?

Every school has its problems and therefore different ways of planning the timetable to meet particular needs. Note your school's special problems, aims and programme.

When I peep into my last year's report I am almost surprised at the progress that has been made in the year since. Then I said, "On 1 September 1976 the three institutions training teachers in Leeds will become one institution, so far without a name.....Teacher education will be unified. But where will it be done? On three sites, as now, on two or on only one.....?" And so on.

Well, the new institution now has a name - Leeds Polytechnic. A name that might suggest to some people a take-over of the College rather than a union of equal partners. The Polytechnic is divided into a number of schools. Here, at Beckett Park, there is a School of Education and the Carnegie School of Physical Education and Human Movement Studies.

But what do you think this place as a whole is called, On the official papers I have seen it is called "Leeds Polytechnic - Beckett Park Site". A name that might suggest open-cast mining.

Teacher training is now concentrated here at Beckett Park and no new students have gone to James Hraham or the Polytechnic Education Department. For the time being the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~three-year course is the City of Leeds an Carnegie course, that is, the new B.Ed.(Ordinary) degree course we devised here, that started in 1974 and is validated by the University of Leeds. But a new course is being planned. When it begins to operate, which is not likely to be before 1978, it will be validated by the Council for National Academic Awards. So the link with the University of Leeds will disappear. This link has grown, closer, stronger and more fruitful since the McNair Report of 1944, the introduction of the B.Ed.(Honours) degree in 1968 and the introduction of the B.Ed.(Ordinary) degree in 1974, and I personally regard ~~it as a calamity that it~~ its disappearance as a calamity and a terrible price to pay for whatever benefits are hoped for.

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During the year three well-known and long-serving members of staff retired. Mr. Willmott, deputy principal since 1965, went at Easter. He was followed in the summer by two heads of departments: Dr. Bell, head of geography and a member of staff for 24 years; and Mr. Elms, head of religious studies and a member of staff for 22 years. These three had all made their distinctive contributions to the life and work of the College, each in his own way helping to make a great College, and many former students owe them a great debt.

These three retirements were expected, but the College suffered a severe shock in February when Mrs. Aldam, our catering officer, was compelled to retire because of the state of her health. She had looked after the refectory since it opened in 1963. When separate catering in each hall of residence gave way to communal catering in the refectory many members of the College saw the change as the end of the communal life of the College. Of course it was a profound change, and of course the halls lost much of their importance and influence, but the refectory has become a feature of the College of which we can all be justly proud, a feature that many outsiders envy. For me it has been a great pleasure to meet my colleagues over lunch in such pleasant surroundings. I take meals from time to time in many institutions of higher education and I do not know one that can match our refectory in the standard of food and the standard of service. For all this Mrs. Aldam, and the staff she managed so well, can be proud. As this Association has good reason to know, our refectory our refectory has kept us as near to gracious living as it is possible to be in an age when standards in these matters have dropped alarmingly. You will all be glad to know that retirement has proved to be the right decision and that Mrs. Aldam's health is now much better. We shall all have the pleasure of seeing her this evening.

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Even if the year 1975-76 had not been the last year of the College's life it would have been notable in one respect. It was the year when finding teaching posts became more difficult than ever before - even more difficult than 1935, when I started my teaching career. I cannot give reliable figures, but at the end of the summer many very good students, possibly half the College's output, were without posts to go to. It has been heart-breaking talking with these good students, who were impatient to get started on the work they had been preparing for, not merely because they needed money but because they really wanted to teach.

Apart from this, I have no inclination to go into any detail about the events of the year. It was probably a normal year but for the event that dominated that dominated all our lives - the impending ~~merger~~ amalgamation of the College with Leeds Polytechnic. This actually occurred. Presumably it occurred precisely at midnight on Tuesday 31 August, but when I walked out and looked around the grounds at that time I could see nothing unusual going on.