

## Education in Guernsey in the Early 20th Century:

### The Annual Reports on Primary Schools at the time of World War One

Over the next few weeks Guernsey pupils will be given the opportunity to reflect on life for Guernsey children and their families during the First World War. Schools will be working with Never Such Innocence, a charity dedicated to educating young people across the globe about the First World War, its impact and legacy.

Dan Snow, historian and a contributor to the project, explains the significance of World War I:

*The First World War was a military, political, economic and human catastrophe which destroyed millions of lives and fundamentally altered the course of human history. The war changed Britain and the world. Only by understanding it and its consequences can we make sense of the world around us today.*

Guernsey experienced these changes as much as any other community and over the past 18 months the island's young people have been finding out through various projects the impact that the war had on Guernsey at home and abroad. Studying about the war has given a window on a world 100 years ago and that experience is set to continue in 2016, as pupils and the island community learn about Guernsey soldiers' experience at the Battle of the Somme or Jutland, the formation of the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry and the introduction of conscription.

Pupils will be encouraged to reflect on what life must have been like on the front line, but charities such as Never Such Innocence also want to emphasise how the Great War was, indeed, a world war impacting on every corner of the globe. For that reason the theme of the project is Empires at War.

Guernsey has a wealth of resources that help to bring history to life. That may be the Parish War Memorials, archives of the weekly and daily Guernsey Press or the wealth of materials that are available on the Guernsey Great War website: [www.greatwarci.net](http://www.greatwarci.net).

Recently we discovered another resource, *The Annual Reports on Public Primary Schools in Guernsey 1900–1920*, which provides the island with a fascinating insight into the world of education in Guernsey. Below is a summary of some of the key findings.

A sunny day and everyone in their Sunday Best. School and Date unknown. All photographs courtesy of Guernsey Museums & Galleries



## Why were inspections introduced?

The early 20th century was a time of significant change for Guernsey schools. In particular compulsory education, requiring pupils to remain in education until 13 years, was established in 1903. This shift in policy required a new law, established in 1900. There was also a requirement for a heavy building programme, in part to accommodate the increased numbers of pupils, and over the following decade there is reference to building works at Amherst and Vale, and in 1909 the new Vauvert Schools were opened. The quality of the school buildings is constantly praised, often in glowing terms. The 1916 report is typical of many:

*The general standard of School buildings in Guernsey appears to be on the whole superior to that in the average English County. The Schools in the Island are as a rule well-built and well planned, and cases of unsatisfactory premises are surprisingly few. One may make special mention of the excellence of the St Sampson's school; the buildings are very good indeed and their position, at the highest point of Delancey Park with a full view of Sark and the intermediate Islands, is one which compels admiration...*

*Moreover, Guernsey playgrounds such as those at the Vale, Amherst and many other schools are also much above the average. In England, one regrets to say a playground, too frequently, resembles a barrack square. The ideal of most committees, which is greatly superior, is apparently to have, in addition to some gravelled space, a field adjoining the school (as at St Martin's, St Saviour's, Hautes Capelles and elsewhere), to plant it round with trees, to use bushes or shrubbery plants as a boundary instead of high stone walls and to have an abundance of flowers throughout the season.*

And at that time comparisons of costs were much in favour for the parishes that had responsibility for funding the buildings. The 1908 report states:

*Not the least astonishing thing is the 'cost per head' at which these schools have built – a cost which is something like two-thirds of what we have to pay for similar buildings in England.*

The 1911 report, however, must have caused some consternation in the north of the island. After a lengthy criticism of the Vale school building – *'The old school is in the hands of the builders'*.

The inspector comments:

*It is a matter of regret that the inhabitants of the Vale, with an excellently planned school within a couple of miles, should rest content with the cheap makeshifts that have been, or are being, put up.*

Inspections were established as a response not just to a heightened interest in education but also because of some outspoken criticism of Guernsey schools. In 1894 local inspector, the Reverend Philbeam, produced a report that stated that accommodation was generally inadequate, with

classrooms badly lit and ventilated. He was also critical of furniture – a constant theme of inspections – stating that the furniture was all of the same height as if the children were all the same age.

In 1902 HM’s chief inspector of schools was sent to Guernsey to make a comprehensive survey of inspection records. Marked improvements were acknowledged but still there is some frank criticism, referring to ‘*such schools as Les Landes, the Maresquet and the Hautes Capelles infant school as veritable plague spots*’. He criticised backless desks, lack of playground accommodation and the poor condition of toilets.

Clearly authorities took to heart some of the criticism and in 1908 Mr Kennedy-Herbert returned to the island and paid the following glowing testimony:

*I now return to find a change that is almost phenomenal...Of the Town it may be said that its school supply is of a kind which leaves but little to be desired. Plain well-arranged buildings, ample playgrounds and modern equipment have superseded the old makeshift unwholesome rooms.*

*In the Country, too, the Parishes have, almost all of them, set their houses in order.*

And it’s not just the buildings that receive praise:

*The quality in the personnel of the Staffs has changed greatly for the better.*

His observations about pupils are equally complimentary:

*The children offer admirable material; they are naturally bright and, in school, they are diligent, attentive and orderly.*

However, it’s not all positive. The Inspector retains his greatest criticism for the system being followed in Guernsey based upon examinations:

*The system is still the pure examination system which has been discarded as worthless – worse than worthless, deadening – by all modern educationalists. Under its crippling influence there is no growth of intellectual power, no development from within, no expansion or elasticity, self effort, alertness in investigation and interpretation, inquisitiveness, power of finding out things for themselves and of drawing their own conclusions, cannot be cultivated in the children.*



A class of Melrose girls in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

## What was inspected?

Ordinarily the annual report included three elements: the report of the States inspector, a report from the supervisor of the attendance officers who provided a table of attendance by school and a report or update on religious knowledge.

The Inspector's reports, in particular, would cover a range of topics and inspectors saw fit to comment on anything from buildings to health, from subjects to teaching arrangements. The 1911 report is especially esoteric. Mr Sadler, the lead inspector, spends much time explaining that he has had to make new arrangements as he has recently been appointed Vice Chancellor of the University of Leeds so he has asked various colleagues to support him, including a former Director of Education in the Gold Coast, Australia.

Mr Sadler then comments on all the primary schools. The Amherst School entry is interesting:

*Amherst Boys School: – This is a large school extremely well-handled by the Head Master [Mr W Stringer] in whom I was glad to meet a graduate of the University of Manchester and a former member of my own class in the Education Department of that University...The tone of discipline of the school is exceedingly good...There is a healthy esprit de corps in the school.*

At Vauvert School he is concerned about the noise in the new school, especially on the first floor:

*Unfortunately the upper floor consists of planks only; the result is that when the boys move about much noise is heard below. It deserves consideration whether by covering the upper floor with cork floorcloth, with felt beneath (or in some other way), this defect could be economically removed.*

He also has a solution for ball games being banned in the playground:

*In the playground games of ball have been prohibited on account of inconvenience caused to neighbours. Possibly by putting up wire fences the danger of this inconvenience could be lessened as to allow this restriction to be removed.*

At Castel School he deals with a concern about one particular student's welfare:

*One boy in this school is entered in the register as mentally deficient. He does nothing during the whole school day. It should be possible to find him some occupation.*

Then, the next observation is about coat hooks!

*The cloak-room is too small. Additional hooks might be put in the old porch adjoining.*

No doubt some teachers would wish that he had kept observations to topics such coat hooks. He wasn't impressed by Cobo Infant School:

*The teaching appeared somewhat mechanical and the children not very much interested in it.*

Saward infants' school was equally criticised:

*the teaching is weak and a marked improvement should be made if the children are to receive the education which will fit them to take a proper place in the next stage of their education.*

And comments about Hautes Capelles Schools must have caused some discussion in the staff room:

*It would be a good thing to have new blood in this school, as the staff consists too exclusively of ex-pupils of the school.*

Before discussing the curriculum he makes some observations that he has also shared with the medical officer about ventilation and disinfection:

*A disinfectant solution such as Cyllin should be used for cleaning of the floors of schools. This solution might be applied every afternoon by elder scholars or pupil teachers at the hour of closing. The adoption of this plan would probably lead to a great improvement in the health and work of the scholars.*



One of the 'baby classes' – as described by the 1912 inspector

## What was the impact of the war?

The annual reports continued throughout the war years. The 1914 report was undertaken from September to November, so the impact of the war had not yet been felt, although there is a reference to a shortage of teachers, which is a taste of things to come:

*Increasing difficulty has been experienced in securing Masters and Mistresses to fill vacancies on the staff before the war came to aggravate the situation.*

The 1915 report is shaped much more by the war and it's clear from the first few paragraphs that the war is having an effect:

*Owing to the unsettled conditions occasioned by the war, the arrangements for the conduct of the annual inspection in Religious Knowledge fell through.*

The summary then outlines the impact of the 'dislocation caused by the War'.

- A. *'Several of our schools were occupied on the outbreak of the War by the militia and other buildings had to be requisitioned on hire for school purposes; but at the close of 1914 only the Forest Mixed School and the Vale Boys' school remained in Military occupation. These*

*buildings were relinquished in the spring of 1915 and after necessary cleaning and repairs were made available in May and June respectively.*

*It is a matter of congratulation that interference with the Educational administration has in this respect been strictly limited.*

- B. *But in the matter of the teaching staff we have suffered as elsewhere from the War and many of the departments are now understaffed owing to the enlistment of male teachers and the shortage of efficient substitutions of both sexes*
- C. *The office has been very short handed. The chief clerk left the island with the First Guernsey Contingent and has since obtained a commission in HM's forces*

Another impact was the suspension of the compulsory education law which can be withheld 'in the event of an epidemic and in other case of exceptional gravity'.

Nineteen children who had reached the age of 12 ('or thereabouts') received 'total dispenses' whilst 26 children received 'partial dispenses'. The dispenses were made for children 'whose services were required by parents in poor circumstances to help them tide over these times of stress'.

The report then makes a positive observation about the Guernsey war-time economy:

*It is a tribute to the sound economic condition of the island that this very moderate relaxation of the Law of Compulsory attendance has proved sufficient.*

In the body of the report there is more evidence of the impact and a concern of 'adequacy of staff':

A *Out of the 31 departments outside St Peter Port 21 would fail to satisfy the minimum conditions which have been prescribed as obligatory in a Public Elementary School in England; or*

B *In no parish outside St Peter Port is every department satisfactory according to such a minimum standard.*

The 1916 report carries on in a similar vein. 1916 saw the inauguration of the Education Council but the report makes a telling observation about the possibility for development: 'The time is not opportune for new departures'.

No inspections of French or Religious Knowledge could be held 'owing to the war'.

The war directly impacted on the inspection report:

*no detailed reports on individual schools are being sent; in this respect the English practice during the war is being followed. The strain of war conditions is a serious one and it appears to be undesirable to criticise in detail teachers who are undoubtedly putting forth extra effort at such a time to keep the work of the children at a satisfactory level.*

Teaching shortages remained a concern:

*The shortage of teachers has become still more marked than in the previous year and several departments are now most inadequately staffed, in spite of every effort to secure the services of Supplementary Teachers for the duration of the war. The Council feel that the Island owes a debt of gratitude to the Teachers for their loyal endeavours to maintain the efficiency of their schools under decidedly trying conditions.*

Seventy-eight children between 12 and 13 years received total or partial dispenses from the compulsory attendance law.

The human loss of war was poignantly reflected in the closing paragraphs and the tribute to the chief clerk E J Blight:

*Since its close the sad news of the death, in action, of the Chief clerk, E J Blight has been received by the Council with the deepest regret. In him the Island has lost an able, loyal and devoted servant, courteous to all classes and gifted with a high sense of duty.*

The 1917 and 1918 reports show no respite:

*1917: The period under report has been in all departments one of considerable strain for the Teachers and anxiety for the Managing bodies. There is doubtless a loss of efficiency in several directions but on the whole we have reason to be grateful that the dislocation has not been more serious.*

However the report concludes with a greater sense of optimism:

*The shortage of teachers continues and will of course not be removed for several years. But there are distinct signs of improvement; thus it appears to be more easy than formally to fill vacancies, in spite of a dearth of teachers on the mainland.*

In 1918 there's a similar story: 'war conditions prevailed throughout the year and are reflected in most departments of administration'.

The island also faced the difficulties of the influenza epidemic, which just made matters worse:

*The need for dispenses in consequence of war conditions has not abated. The influenza epidemic in the autumn had a most disturbing influence, as in some quarters concessions were abused. The great cost of boots and other articles of clothing militated against regular attendance.*

Finally by 1919 there was some reprieve from the war but, regrettably other circumstances still made life difficult:

*most of the schools have been more adequately staffed in the year under report, though in several country schools the shortage of teachers is still a marked feature. The demobilization of a number of young male teachers afforded temporary relief but in September the majority left for college to complete their training.*

*The year has been a decidedly unhealthy one, what with influenza and other epidemics. Coughs and colds have been rampant, and the severe economic conditions have told on the physical conditions of children.*

*The average attendance of the year is the lowest on record, viz.; 84.5 percent a melancholy result of the Great War.*

## What were some of the recurring themes in the reports?

Over nearly 20 years there is a shift in the focus of the reports. By the end of the war the reports are focusing on aspects such as the relationship with the colleges and the intermediate schools, which were inspected formally for the first time in 1919. Towards the end of this period there is also recognition of the establishment of the Technical and Art School, which had over 120 pupils by 1918.

Finding and retaining qualified staff was always a concern and the reports comment on issues such as pay scales, the role of the pupil teachers' centre which supplied staff and made recommendations to enable staff to transfer easily from England. They also make observations about the disparity of provision across voluntary and private schools and generally showed concern about private schools.

Equally there are themes which give an impression of school life in Guernsey in the early 20th century. Here are a few of those that will be of particular interest to pupils as they research the World War I topic.

### Guernsey children and their families

Regular comments (and compliments) are made about the distinct qualities of Guernsey Children. The 1915 report states:

*The actual work done in schools is, generally speaking efficient...If one were to give a reason for this one would say that not only are the teachers putting forth extra effort but the Guernsey boy seems to be above the average as regards brains and power of independent work. He resembles curiously enough, in many respects boys one meets in Lancashire in his practical outlook of life and common sense grasp of things in general.*

Despite the comparison with children from elsewhere the author acknowledged that Guernsey children should celebrate being a little different:

*It does not at all follow that the path of progress for Guernsey lies in an imitation of English Schools. Guernsey children have a genius of their own and it is by discovering and developing this in suitable directions that the Schools will reach their highest development.*

The Inspector, Mr Page, was clearly a fan of all things Guernsey. His concluding comment is:

*It is perhaps outside the scope of an official report, but one cannot omit mention of certain other points with which one was particularly impressed, namely the taste and commonsense shown by Guernsey Parents in the dress of their children, the charming manners of the children and the friendliness displayed to visiting inspectors by the teachers and managers of the schools.*



He continues in this vein on his return in 1919:

*The manners and general behaviour of the children both in and out school reflect the highest credit on parents and teachers.*

It wasn't just Mr Page who was impressed with Guernsey children. Here is a selection of comments over the years:

*1912: I was much impressed with the good order of the Schools and the general tone and demeanour of the children which was all that could be wished.*

*1916: The natural capacity of the Guernsey children and their quickness of comprehension will raise the work above the level of that found in the average English school.*

*1919: The manners and general behaviour of the children both in and out of school reflect the highest credit on parents and teachers.*



St Andrew's Girls School Maypole Dancing for the Coronation 1910

## Teaching staff

Generally observations about teaching staff were also complimentary:

*1914: Children in your schools are being taught by a body of teachers who give the greatest pains to their moral and religious education from the highest motives.*

*1915: An early impression, fully confirmed at one's second visit, relates to the excellent work done by many of the teachers.*

*1917: As regards the instruction given, the chief point noticed was the kindness of teachers to the children; this is a very considerable part of good teaching in the case of younger children.*

Some of the references to particular schools were especially positive:

*1912: Vauvert – I gladly record my appreciation of the work and influence of the Teachers, most of them young, all of them earnest, who are devoting themselves to bringing sweetness and light into the lives of children from whom in other ways much has been withheld.*

However inspectors weren't afraid to criticise where they saw fit:

*1911: Eturs is not very good. The mistress is pleasant and exercises a good influence but did not seem very capable or original.*

*1911: Saward I regard, partly as inefficient. The Mistress is worthy, but is much handicapped by deafness and where infants are concerned a teacher might almost as well be blind as deaf. She does not appear to have much sympathy with children.*

## Health and wellbeing

The reports comment upon the health of the pupils, especially if it impacted on attendance figures. Clearly epidemics were an issue at this time, as demonstrated by the recording of illness in the reports:

*1909: In February a severe outbreak of mumps broke out in the Town Schools which spread to St Sampsons, St Martin's and St Andrew's schools. During two months of the year over 20% of the children attending these schools were absent owing to this malady.*

*1910: During many months of the year an Epidemic of Measles raged in the country parishes and finally invaded the Town Parish.*

*1911: St Pierre-Du-Bois: Whooping-cough had been prevalent in the Parish, and its after-effects were shown in the ceaseless coughing in the school.*

*1915: The percentage of school attendance which in 1914 reached the record figure of 91 [%] has fallen during the year under report to 88.6 [%]. The prevalence of whooping cough accounts partially for the decline, but the circumstances of the less prosperous member of the community have necessitated a measure of leniency which normal conditions would not justify.*

*1917: Though there were no epidemics of a serious nature, the extreme cold of the winter militated against regular attendance, which was also seriously affected by the prevalence of scabies and other contagious skin diseases.*

*1918: The influenza epidemic in the autumn had a most disturbing influence.*

*1919: The year has been a decidedly unhealthy one what with influenza and other epidemics. Coughs and colds have been rampant.*

*1920: The Compulsory Attendance Department has worked again under difficulties owing to the widespread epidemic of measles in the first quarter of the year and the resulting delicacy of many of the children during the succeeding months.*

Throughout the reports there is reference to the role of schools in promoting health, especially in partnership with the medical officer of health:

*1911: We suggest that he [the medical officer of health] should be asked to give a short course of lectures to the teachers in the schools and at the pupil teachers centre, for the purpose of calling attention to the points in the health and physique of the children which should be carefully watched by the teachers.*

*In order to facilitate prompt communication between the teachers and the Medical Officer of Health, it seems desirable that the town and country schools should be connected with a telephone service. The usefulness of the medical officer of health would also be greatly increased if he were furnished with a motor car for quick conveyance.*

*1914: Certain practices exist in many of the schools that are more or less injurious to the children's physique, such as their folding their arms when seated, their being crowded together for oral lessons, their being required to stand for a whole lesson, their occupying seats and desks of unsuitable size, and their sitting in unhealthy positions during the writing lessons.*

*1916: There is a consensus of opinion amongst teachers that children of the poorer classes have benefited greatly from the meals supplied during the winter at cheap rates at the various kitchens established throughout the island. The Boot Fund organized by charitable people has also proved a great boon and has solved some difficult problems for the Compulsory Education Department.*



The 1914 Inspector would not have been impressed: *'Certain practices exist in many of the schools that are more or less injurious to the children's physique, such as their folding their arms when seated, their being crowded their occupying seats and desks of unsuitable size'*

### Buildings and supplies

Although the inspectors were generally very positive about the state of Guernsey school buildings, they would comment where there was concern:

*1911: St Pierre-Du-Bois: The drawbacks to efficient instruction which were mentioned in the 1908 report still remain. With five standards being taught in one room it is a difficult matter to arrange a suitable course of lessons. It is also hard for the teachers to prevent the lessons from disturbing those in the adjoining department from which the large room is separated only by a wooden partition.*

*1911: Ventilation and disinfection: If I may touch on a rather delicate subject, I would venture to ask the attention of teachers to the importance of keeping windows open during lessons as well as of securing a strong draught of air through the rooms at each time of recess.*

*1911: Sarel Infants School: I found this school had not been cleaned for two days. A hasty attempt had been made to do something after the children had assembled on the morning of my arrival...The school appeared adequately furnished and equipped but the walls were a*

*good deal discoloured and presented a dingy appearance...I found what appeared to be a refuse heap in the corner of the playground, and the offices needed attention.*

They would also make recommendations for efficiencies. In the 1916 report they suggest an early form of bulk buying:

*1916: In the matter of school equipment and stationery (exercise books, writing papers, pens, etc) each parish obtains its supplies independently of the others. The number of such articles used during the course of the year by 5,000 children is very large, yet no attempt seems to be made to secure the benefit of contract prices.*



St Andrew's Infants 1905 The children wear a variety of clothing - shorts, Guernsey pullovers, sailor-suits, collared-blazers, collared shirts, dresses, pinafores.

## Summary

These Annual Reports provide a fascinating insight into a world that, in many ways, seems alien to the high-tech, sophisticated environment that is inhabited by young people today as they go about the business of acquiring the skills and competences to succeed in a rapidly changing world. Classes of 60+, five classes being taught in one room, learning by rote, writing on slate and leaving school at 13 years seem an age away from today's experience. But perhaps we need to remember the often-quoted observation that was a favourite of Lesley Le Page, former Principal of Blanchelande College. As educationalists discussed the ever-changing world of education and learning, Lesley would remind us: 'People don't change, it's the circumstances in which people live that change.'

That adage is well exemplified by a read of these reports. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century was a difficult time and yet there is a real desire to improve education in these reports:

- Concern about the well-being of young people;
- Celebrating and coping with Guernsey's uniqueness and difference from England;
- Ensuring that the island has a regular supply of qualified teachers;
- Ensuring that resources (including buildings) are fit for purpose.

These are all themes that resonate with the most recent Education Department report, undertaken in 2015. Studying Guernsey's education experience, especially at a time of great change such as the years of the First World War, helps us make sense of the world in which we live.

## Subjects studied

The reports give us an indicator of the curriculum that was studied by boys and girls and through the attention given to certain subjects we know that reading, French and Religious Knowledge were considered key areas.

### Reading

There is a recurring concern about the standard of reading. This is particularly reflected in the 1915 report:

*One is inclined to say that the weakest subject of importance in the island is reading. The standard considered satisfactory in many schools appears to be that of some years ago in England and takes no account of the marked development which has been made since then owing to more generous methods of teaching the subject.*

The main concern is also echoed in other reports:

*Of the different causes which might be given for this low standard and the chief is probably that the books read by the children are too few in number and too uninteresting.*

A flavour of learning is then exemplified, albeit 'a poorer method':

*In one school the youngest children, none of whom could speak English, spent the whole of the first year in learning their letters. The children sat at their desks or stood around the board whilst the teacher (a young girl) pointed to each letter on the chart. The children, in chorus or individual, recognised each letter as a, b, etc. As far as one could ascertain the process was never varied. For about half an hour each day the children remained still and just identified different letters on the sheet. No attempt was being made anywhere in this school to teach the correct sounds of these letters in different words – the older children frequently gave the French sounds, pronouncing instance 'it' as 'eat'; in one case a Standard VI boy was heard to call 'ground' 'garoon'.*

Reassuringly, the 1916 report notes a significant improvement:

*The response to the recommendations made in that report [1915] has been surprisingly vigorous both on the part of teachers and local committees.*

The 1912 report identified the lack of good libraries as a particular concern:

*In each school the existence of a library seems to depend upon the extent to which the Head Teacher is prepared to sacrifice his own time and energy to its maintenance. Many Head Teachers have done much this way. Some have been able to do little or nothing.*

*But when we reflect that part of the chief business of a school is to stimulate mental activity in the children who frequent it, and that reading is the readiest and most obvious field for such activity, the necessity of forming good habits, and sound tastes in reading will be realised. There is plenty of bad literature around and it is easy to acquire a taste for it. The best way to protect the children from it is to give them ready access to good literature, and encourage them to make use of it.*

## Manual studies

The reports demonstrate a shift in focus as ‘*manual*’ subjects take a greater prominence. In the 1908 report there is a list of the ‘*hand and eye training*’ made available through manual studies.

*The usual forms which these manual subjects take are:-*

*A – Drawing, Bush-Drawing, Modelling in Plasticine, Basketwork, Modelling in Cardboard and woodwork;*

*B – Carpentry and Gardening for the older boys, and the Domestic subjects, Cookery etc for the older girls*

*In group A subjects the girls can join and do join, gladly, until they reach the stage when they must take up the Domestic subjects.*

There is then a further description of the role of manual training:

*Manual training must always be educational. Its purpose is not the development of technical but of mental power, the power of seeing things as they really are.*

For that reason there is a full explanation of how drawing should be taught:

*Drawing is, of course, one of the most important subjects in this list: drawing that is, from model objects or from natural forms direct. Flat copies are of no use; they lead to nothing but imitative and mechanical work and do not bring a child close with truth or with nature, or provide it with something to do which from beginning to end is its own creation.*

By 1912 there seems to have been developments:

*It is gratifying to note that manual work is, surely if slowly, developing. Lessons of practical cookery have been added to the curriculum of the St Sampson’s Girls.*

*The teaching of Gardening to boys is extending and the subject awakens considerable enthusiasm at Amherst and Melrose...Steady advance is being made in the quality of Drawing, while Needlework is now taught on modern, practical and sensible lines. Sewing machines are now noticeable in the majority of our Girls’ schools.*

## History, Geography and Nature Study lessons

The 1914 report includes the first full reference to history, geography and nature studies:

*A good deal of interest is evidently taken in the geography. More use might, however, be well made of short excursions, for there are few places where the natural surroundings of a large number of the schools lend themselves as well as do those of Guernsey to the teaching of simple geographical facts.*

*Many of the schools are now using an easy historical reading-book in the upper classes, a practice which might well be made universal.*

*Some of the nature study work which I saw was promising and was evidently having the effect of increasing the children's interests and powers of observation, it should be correlated so far as possible, with the drawing and other kinds of handwork.*

*Lessons in nature study might well be substituted for the lessons on unfamiliar animals and other unfamiliar subjects which are set down in the schemes of work of some schools.*

There had been previous mention of these subjects. The 1911 report included some suggestions for localising Guernsey History:

*The teaching of the History of Guernsey: - We find that practically no attention is paid in the schools to the history of the island, a subject which if well taught would prove fascinating to the pupils and conducive to their patriotic pride... it would be possible however for the teachers to interest children in this subject if they had at their disposal an interesting and accurate school reader giving in outline, with abundant illustration, a sketch of the history of Guernsey opening with an account of the life of primitive man in the Island as illustrated in the invaluable collection of prehistoric antiquities in the Lukis Museum.*

### Arithmetic

The 1914 report also paints an interesting picture of the challenges faced by using Guernsey factors as well as an interesting take on how arithmetic should be applied to life (for boys and girls).

*The time devoted to this subject is very considerable, and it appears to me that the results are frequently incommensurate with the time so spent, especially in the case of the lower classes. The difficulty experienced by the teachers in dealing with the subject is increased by the somewhat complicated system of weights and measures, and by the system of coinage...in the upper classes of the girl's schools the course might well be simplified by the omission of certain portions which are of little real use to them and by the introduction of more household arithmetic while in the rural schools the course might have a practical bearing on the actual surroundings and daily life of the children.*

### Physical Exercise

Physical Exercise isn't commented upon until the 1911 report, when there is a commentary on certain schools:

*1911: Melrose Schools: - A keen interest is taken by the boys in the school in gardening, swimming and football. During last summer thirty boys have learnt to swim.*

*Amherst – there is a healthy esprit de corps fostered by organised games. Fifty-six boys can now swim a fair distance.*

*St Sampson's High Schools: one of the assistant teachers (Mr Hamilton) put the upper classes through some of their physical exercises. These were very smartly done. This school excels in football, a game which cultivates manliness and esprit de corps.*

*Castel: There is a good playground and a piece of grass large enough for football. The school however is not in the Guernsey league as it seems impossible at present to get a team of boys together.*

*Forest: The drill and physical exercises lacked precision.*

The 1912 report considers the merits of playing sport:

*1912: Boys and girls learn better in the playing field than anywhere else those inestimable moral qualities which are summed up in the expression 'playing the game'. Probably these qualities are never more urgently needed than they are now.*

*A start has been made with the Schools Football League. This and kindred enterprises ought to be encouraged and stimulated.*

By the end of the war years there is a comment showing that there have been developments:

*1918: A very successful sports meeting was held in July in which the Junior Departments of the Intermediate Schools participated. The Council hold that these praiseworthy efforts of the Teachers to develop the physical culture of the young generation deserve generous support.*

## Music

Throughout the reports there is constant positive reference to the singing at schools. The 1910 report makes a general comment:

*Great progress has been made in the teaching of singing. More time is not given to the subject, but while formerly practically all our Scholars sang as nature prompted them, a large proportion are now being taught to sing with results as gratifying to themselves as they are pleasing to their listeners.*

The Religious Knowledge Inspector regularly comments upon the quality of singing.

Examples include:

*1910: Melrose Boys' School – The singing and chanting are a pleasant feature in the Religious Instruction here.*

## French

The comments from the reports in 1911 and 1914 reflect some of the disquiet about teaching French in Guernsey and the challenges of teaching to pupils who spoke patois:

*1911: The difficult but very important subject of French is taught with varying success. It is admitted that, as regards the town schools at least, the language to most of the children is a foreign one. But the teachers of St Peter Port have faced this difficulty with much skill and success. Properly taught, the study of a second language sharpens their wits and awakens their interest in a marked degree.*



*1914: There are two classes of children to be considered: 1 Those who invariably speak the native patois at home, and 2 Those who speak English at home.*

*As regards the former class it would, I presume, be almost universally admitted that English is the language of which a fluent use will be of the greater benefit to them in their future life, and it appears to me somewhat doubtful whether (in the case of both classes) the systematic teaching of French at a very early age does not hamper their use of English and puzzle them to some extent.*

### Religious Knowledge

The subject of Religious Knowledge had its own inspection for many years. Broadly the comments were positive. The comment in the 1910 report gives a flavour of the topic:

*1910: Improvement in Religious Teaching and Knowledge still continues, and the interest shown by both teachers and children in this part of their work made my inspections a pleasure.*

*To the Senior Scholars the Old Testament Subjects, the Books of Judges and Samuel have been taught in an intelligent way; The events of Our Lord's Life and the details and lessons of His Miracles and Parables, as related in the Synoptic Gospels have also been well and practically taught. The Sermon on the Mount however, of which an analysis is given for the Teachers' help might, in most of the Schools, have been more fully dealt with.*

*In the Middle and Lower Groups, the explanation of the Lord's Prayer and Commandments might be made in a way more suited to the ages of the children – a rather difficult but not impossible task – as proved by the excellent answering in these groups, on these subjects.*

*In the Infants' Schools and Classes, the usual course of Instruction has been ably and successfully given, and the children were as a rule keen to answer. Nearly all the schools are now provided with excellent pictures illustrating the Scriptural Lessons.*