THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
OF
DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

Report of a Special I.N.T.O. Committee
"THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF

DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN"

– Report of a Special Committee

Published in International Year of the Child 1979.
Introduction

As its main contribution to the International Year of the Child, the Central Executive Committee of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation decided to establish a special committee to consider the educational needs of disadvantaged children.

The special committee decided to draw up a series of recommendations designed to provide an educational programme of positive discrimination in favour of those children, who suffer from the effects of social and economic disadvantage.

While recognising that children can be "disadvantaged" in many ways, e.g. emotional, intellectual, physical or cultural, the committee concerned itself primarily with those children who are disadvantaged by virtue of the social and economic conditions which prevail in their homes and environment.

It is appropriate that, in the centenary year of Padraig Pearse, we should remind ourselves of his admonition in the 1916 proclamation to "cherish all our children equally". The committee would wish to see those words translated into action through the implementation of its recommendations, with a consequent discrimination in favour of those children who are underprivileged by virtue of their socio-economic circumstances.

Disadvantaged children constitute one of the major social problems in our society. Regrettably successive administrations appear to have abrogated largely their responsibility for these young people. The implementation of the committee's recommendations would represent a major step towards alleviating educational disadvantage and would make the Year of the Child in Ireland a resounding success.

The members of the committee, in preparing their report, drew on their own experiences and on those of many of their colleagues. They examined national and international reports and abstracted from them whatever seemed relevant to Irish circumstances. They interviewed many experts who had first hand experience of dealing with the problems of disadvantaged children. This report is compiled from their interpretation of the information thus obtained.

The committee hopes that its suggestions will stimulate research into the problems of disadvantaged children in Ireland. Indeed it is imperative that after the introduction of these recommendations, they should be scientifically assessed, reviewed and, if necessary modified or developed.

The committee decided at an early stage in its deliberations to restrict itself to consideration of the provision which could be made in schools
to help disadvantaged children: the object of this provision being to compensate, within the school, for the children's socio-economic disadvantages.

Devising a formula by which children can be assessed as to whether or not, or to what degree, they are disadvantaged presented a major difficulty. Significantly the committee has not found a suitable formula in any of the studies, national or international, which it investigated. Many of these studies have stressed the need for a clear definition of 'disadvantage' and the need for specific criteria for identification, but have failed to provide them.

The committee was convinced that it was essential to be able to identify children who are disadvantaged and decided at an early stage to establish a formula for such identification. It considered that whatever test was adopted would have to be one which could be administered easily. It also agreed that whatever information was necessary for the test should be readily available.

After much deliberation the committee decided on a formula which it presents as a practical method of identifying those schools in which special provision should be made.

Although the committee recognises that there are disadvantaged children in the majority of schools in the country, it directs its recommendations towards the schools in the depressed urban areas because it is satisfied that there is a major educational problem in many of these schools.

The report does not deal specifically with one particular group of socio-economically disadvantaged children, viz, the children of travelling people. While they would profit from the implementation of these recommendations, nevertheless, the scope of the travellers' problems goes beyond the range of this report. Special problems which require special solutions are created by their mobility and cultural background. The whole lifestyle of these children, whether they are begging on a footpath or sheltering in a sodden tent, must evoke our sympathetic response. The committee feels that particular help must be given to them in the implementation of any programme of help for the underprivileged.

The recommendations of the committee cover a wide range of areas including identification, pre-schooling, staffing, curriculum, teacher education and support services. These matters have one thing in common however — they all require considerable public expenditure.

If we are committed to solving the problems of the disadvantaged in our society, we must be prepared to allocate the necessary financial resources. Solutions to our educational and social problems will be
expensive, but in terms of national development they should be seen as an investment.

The committee welcomes the recognition of the needs of educationally disadvantaged pupils by the Government in the National Understanding for Economic and Social Development and the formal commitment to give priority to their education in the allocation of funds. The committee now calls on the Government to implement this commitment as a matter of urgency.

Joe O'Toole, Chairman,

October, 1979.
The Committee

The following were appointed members of the Special Committee: —
J. O'Toole, Chairman
T. Waldron
F. Cunningham
P. Sheehan
J. Lynch
J. Killeen
M. Finn
J. McCarthy
M. McSweeney
C. Keyes
C. Lennon, Secretary

Mr. C. Keyes was unable to take up his position on the committee due to ill-health.

The committee met on 11 occasions between January 3rd and July 24th, 1979.
The Report

1. IDENTIFYING DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

1.1 The committee considered at length the problem of identifying disadvantaged children.

They decided that objective criteria for the identification of schools which contain a high number of disadvantaged children are needed and they listed the following as relevant criteria: —

1.1.1 Unemployment — low family income

Among the definitions of disadvantaged children considered by the committee were:

(i) children are disadvantaged if below average in school achievement as measured by standardised tests in combination with one or more of the following: —

— economic deprivation
— social alienation or geographic isolation - (California Committee on Compensatory Education)¹

(ii) The social and cultural differences cited in "Special Educational Needs (Gulliford):²

— income
— parents' attitudes to education and the child's future occupation
— abnormal home background

The committee found that the level of income is a very significant factor in all attempts to define disadvantage and its importance cannot be overstressed.

The Plowden report³ also recognised this and two out of eight of the criteria recommended in it for identifying Educational Priority Areas in the U.K. are: occupation and level of social welfare benefits.

An estimate of the family's financial situation is also given a priority listing in the Swansea Evaluation Profile (a screening procedure for identifying those entrants to infant schools who are in need of compensatory education)⁴

The Belfast Report on Areas of Special Social Need (1976)⁵ concluded that "an unemployment — low family income" factor was accountable for 49.7% of variation in need as measured by 20 need indicators.

Among the objective indicators capable of being quantified and avail-
able within a reasonable time, the committee believes that priority must be given to the unemployment — low family income factor. We suggest that entitlement to a medical card or receipt of unemployment assistance indicates low family income.

1.1.2 Overcrowding or substandard housing
Information is also readily available on another vital factor — housing. Overcrowded conditions are defined in the points schedule of the scheme of priorities for housing of Dublin Corporation.⁶ (c.f. appendix 2).

Local Authority tenants are three times more likely to be overcrowded than homeowners or tenants of a private landlord (1971 census).⁷

Substandard housing lacks one or more basic amenities such as w.c., bath, hot or cold water supply.

1.1.3 Mentally Retarded, emotionally disturbed or physically handicapped

The proportion of children in a school who are retarded, disturbed or handicapped tends to be highest in deprived districts.⁸

The number of children in this category can be determined through reports from the schools' psychological and medical services.

1.1.4 Educational Disadvantage

This criterion is best estimated by the teacher, taking into consideration such factors as the child's behaviour, social integration, concentration, tiredness, hyperactivity, carelessness, homework, lack of effort, family composition (5 children or more, or one parent figure, or incomplete family).⁵ These factors put a child at an educational disadvantage and also in many cases put the rest of the class at a disadvantage too.³ Suitable standardised attainment tests should be used to back up the teacher's estimation of educational disadvantage.⁴

1.1.5 Parental Attitudes
"Parental attitudes to education accounted for more of the variation in school achievement than either home circumstances or factors in the school". Chazan and Williams.⁴

The most significant disadvantage in educational terms may well be the attitude of the parents to the child's education and future employment.⁹

The Plowden Report also stressed the prime importance of parental attitudes, but points out that "the data for the selection of priority schools (and areas) must be readily available, without additional surveys."
The committee recognises the vital importance of parental attitudes in identifying disadvantage, but also is aware of the practical difficulties involved in measuring those attitudes objectively.

The teachers are in a good position to estimate parental attitudes. In making such an estimate teachers should bear in mind such factors as:

(i) parental contact with the school — whether either of the parents ever came to a school meeting or came to inquire about the child's progress,
(ii) cleanliness of the child and his clothes
(iii) manners of the child
(iv) homework
(v) overtiredness of a child who is, for example, allowed watch television very late at night,
(vi) absenteeism and punctuality — a good indicator of parental regard for school
(vii) health or neglect of child
(viii) basic school equipment of child — pencils, copies etc.
(ix) parents' education (public examinations — schools attended by parents)
(x) parents' expectations and aspirations
(xi) books in the home

1.2 Identification of Disadvantaged Schools

Most schools which contain a large proportion of disadvantaged children are already well known to teachers, inspectors of the Department of Education and Boards of Management. The committee recommends that disadvantaged schools be ranked according to the criteria listed above.

1.2.1 The five criteria can be reduced to two major areas:
(a) Economic Deprivation, i.e. criteria 1 (unemployment — low family income), criteria 2 (overcrowded or sub-standard housing.)
(b) Educational Disadvantage, i.e. criteria 3 (Mentally Retarded disturbed or physically handicapped), criteria 4 (Estimate of educational disadvantage) and criteria 5 (estimate of parental attitudes),

1.2.2 It recommends, therefore, the identification of disadvantaged schools through the application of a points system based on the two major areas.

The committee recommends that Economic Deprivation should receive twice the weighting attached to Educational Disadvantage.
It also recommends that, within the area of Economic Deprivation, criterion 1 should receive twice the weighting attaching to criterion 2. The system should be applied to each child in the school. The combined total number of points for all children enrolled divided by the total enrolment would give an index of disadvantage for each school. The score would be between 0 — 9. Ultimately every "disadvantaged school" should be provided for but, in the interim, the Government would have to decide on the point at which special provision would be made in terms of the finance available and their commitment.

1.2.3 Summary of the guidelines suggested for the identification of disadvantage

(a) Economic Deprivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Unemployment — low family income</td>
<td>receipt of Unemployment Assistance or Benefit or entitlement to Medical Card</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Overcrowded or sub-standard housing</td>
<td>as defined in Appendix 2 and/or lack of w.c. or bath or hot water supply</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Educational Disadvantage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Mentally retarded, disturbed or physically handicapped</td>
<td>school's psychological and medical services</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Estimate of educational disadvantage</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Estimate of Parental attitudes</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

e.g. (i) Evaluation of pupil
Name: John Quinn
Score: criteria 1 points 4

Score: " 2 " 2
(ii) Evaluation of a school
Name: St. Patrick's N.S.
Total enrolment: 200 pupils
Points total for all pupils: 1400 points therefore average score
or index of school is 7.

2. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL PROVISION FOR THE
   DISADVANTAGED

2.1 The committee recommends that special educational provision
   should be made in schools where a high number of children have been
designated disadvantaged and that the special provision should include
(1) a programme of home/school liaison, (2) pre-schools, (3) special
staffing arrangements, (4) specialised training for the teachers, (5)
adaptation of the curriculum and (6) extra facilities and equipment.

2.2 Home — school links
   The committee recommends that in schools with an exceptionally
high number of disadvantaged children a programme should be under-
taken to persuade the parents to become involved in their children's
schooling.

2.2.1 The fullest possible information should be provided about the
life and objectives of the school; pre-enrolment contacts and induction
visits should be arranged. Pre-schooling will help develop close home/
school liaison which can be maintained through the optimum use of
staff in this area.\(^\text{10}\)

School buildings should take account of the parent's role in educa-
tion by providing a favourable environment for communication and co-
operation. Schools should have a telephone, an interview room and a
pleasant waiting area for parents.

2.2.2 The committee recommends that home/school liaison teachers\(^\text{11}\)
should be appointed to the staff of each disadvantaged school to foster
among parents of disadvantaged children a positive interest in education
and to mitigate hostility or suspicion. Such teachers would work in co-
operation with the other class teachers and be subject to the principal in the normal way. These teachers should seek out parents in their own homes.

The visiting teacher should help the child's educational development by

(a) helping parents to encourage their children to speak, listen and observe,
(b) devising and carrying out, in consultation with the class teacher, programmes of home assistance for pupils who have fallen behind because of illness or other factors.
(c) briefing colleagues on circumstances in the home which explain temporary aggressiveness or continuing recalcitrance,
(d) acting as a supernumerary to release colleagues to visit homes themselves or interview parents who visit the school during the working day.

2.2.3 The committee also recommends the appointment of Education Welfare Officers. The Education Welfare Officer should be a person trained in social work who would follow up the symptoms of social deprivation as revealed by the child in school and forge links of better communication between parents and teachers.

At present School Attendance Officers deal mainly with cases of truancy though they are beginning to assume some of the functions of social workers. It is recommended that the responsibilities of School Attendance Officers should be broadened to cover the area of education welfare. School Attendance Officers should be trained in social work to undertake the responsibilities of Education Welfare Officers.

The deployment of Education Welfare Officers should take more account of the incidence of truancy and adverse home conditions than of gross school enrolments.

The Education Welfare Officers should supplement the work of Home/School liaison teachers.

2.3 Pre-schools

The committee recommends the establishment of a well structured pre-school programme providing varied activities and experiences to help the physical, emotional, mental and social development of disadvantaged children which would compensate for the effects of unsuitable environment\(^1\) and enable the children to succeed afterwards in school.\(^{12,13}\)

Such pre-schools should be established and funded by the Department of Education and teaching staff should be specially trained by recognised teacher training institutions.
There is evidence to show that severe early deprivation is reversible by such early intervention. (Pringle, 1975\textsuperscript{14}, Kelleghan, 1977\textsuperscript{1})-

2.3.1 Ancillary staff such as social workers should be attached to such pre-schools to provide the necessary home/school links and nursing care. The committee feels that the earlier that home/school links are established the more likely they are to succeed in changing parental attitudes.

2.4 Staffing in disadvantaged schools
(i) For the purposes of staffing appointment and retention figures, each disadvantaged child should count as two.
(ii) Extra remedial teachers should be appointed.
(iii) A Special Class should be established for every ten children who would normally be assessed as requiring placement in such a class. Severely disturbed and seriously disruptive pupils should be placed in special schools.
(iv) Middle infant classes should be established pending the introduction of preschooling which will necessitate the re-organisation of the infant school.
(v) Changes in teaching personnel or in average enrolment figures should not adversely affect the staffing of the school during the school year.

2.4.1 The Benefits of small class size for socially disadvantaged children should manifest themselves in the following ways:
(i) More individual attention to pupils would be possible giving teachers more time to cope with their emotional and behavioural problems. There would also be more opportunities for one to one teaching and therefore more remedial teaching could take place in the classroom where it is most effective,
(ii) There should be earlier identification of problems,
(iii) Small group work would provide pupils with greater opportunities for language development and social integration. The small group creates a family environment where more concern and kindness can be shown for each individual.
(iv) Discipline would not need to be as rigid as in an ordinary large class. Each pupil could be allowed more freedom of choice and action,
(v) The teacher would be in a better position to learn more about the background and values of each child.
(vi) There should be more effective teaching of practical subjects, which would boost the disadvantaged child's self image and provide more opportunities for social integration.
2.4.2 Classroom Assistants
Classroom assistants with satisfactory training should be appointed on the same basis as child care assistants in special schools especially for the preparation of materials.
One classroom assistant would be necessary in each class.

2.4.3 Clerical Assistance
Each school serving an area of social disadvantage should have clerical assistance because of the extra workload imposed by the preparation of test material, the keeping of individual children's files and the proposed programme of home/school liaison.

2.4.4 Pre-service teacher training
Part of the curriculum in the Colleges of Education should include educational disadvantage. They should also offer an optional course in Teaching the Disadvantaged.
Colleges of Education should establish continuing links with schools in deprived areas to develop and maintain vital communication between colleges and schools.

2.4.5 Inservice Training
A full-time diploma course in teaching the disadvantaged should be established to train qualified teachers specifically for the special challenges of work in areas of social disadvantage. The course should consist of general and specialist elements.
This diploma course should be set up on the same basis and have the same status as the Diploma in Special Education.
A general course should include the following: —
— curriculum development
— remedial teaching
— home/school liaison
— supportive services
— text-book relevancy
— school organisation
— sociology

Specialist courses should include: —
— home/school liaison
— art and craft
— physical education and games
— music
— drama
— education for living
— home economics
2.5 Adaptation of the Curriculum

The curriculum being followed in any school should take account of the environment in which children live. The curriculum and the accompanying texts should be relevant to the pupils' lives. The work being done in reading, writing and mathematics should be based as far as possible on situations and experiences with which they are familiar, and should take account of differing cultural and social attitudes and values.

2.5.1 The present curriculum for primary schools\(^{15}\) is flexible enough to enable it to be adapted for use in disadvantaged schools but it requires considerable adaptation. The task of adapting the curriculum is not one that can be easily undertaken by an individual teacher or an individual school.

2.5.2 For children who are educationally disadvantaged a greater emphasis on activities of a practical nature and less emphasis on the academic is required. In the Rutland Street project\(^1\) and the subsequent "Seven Schools" experiment, one of the greatest difficulties encountered was that of curriculum development.

The committee recommends the setting up of a **Curriculum Development Team.** The task of this team would be to devise a curriculum, specifically for disadvantaged schools, by adapting and modifying the present curriculum and giving it more specific aims. This would also involve research into the production of suitable texts to accompany the curriculum and the production of a Teachers' Handbook setting out general guidelines which could be further adapted by individual teachers or schools.

The setting up of the Curriculum Development Team should be the responsibility of the Department of Education. It should be drawn mainly from teachers with teaching experience in disadvantaged areas, experts from the Colleges of Education, Department of Education personnel with knowledge and expertise in this field and professionals already involved in curriculum development.

2.5.3 English

*Oral*

One of the factors which causes children from disadvantaged areas to experience great difficulties in many aspects of the curriculum is their inadequate grasp of their normal language of communication — in most instances English.

Their vocabulary is limited and their environment affords little opportunity for its extension. This lack of a basic vocabulary causes severe
reading and writing difficulties, inability to cope with text books and poor oral expression. To compensate for this deficiency a first essential would be a structured oral language development programme.

Reading
The reading matter presented to these children should be relevant in terms of age and environment and should be more interesting in content. Educationally disadvantaged children have, by definition, reading ages which are significantly lower than their chronological ages. Yet many of these children have had a more adult outlook on life forced on them by their circumstances. The available readers are suited to children with mental attitudes years younger than their own. The contents of these readers do not take sufficient account of the cultural background of disadvantaged children. Those which are set in towns or cities reflect principally middle class attitudes, situations and environments and consequently do little to catch the interest of children from working class urban areas.

There should be a greater emphasis on social reading, i.e.
reading for protection — signs etc; and
reading for information — e.g. timetables, newspapers and reading instructions.

Writing
Greater emphasis is needed on functional writing — to enable the child to cope with life outside of school and after school, e.g. signature, address, day and date, addressing envelopes, letter writing (both personal and formal — job application) form filling, telegrams, etc.

2.5.4 Maths
There should be more concentration on the day to day practical areas, e.g. use of money, budgeting, saving, services, banks, H.P., rentals, bus fares, newspapers, calculating wage and deductions therefrom, time timetables, calendar, measurements in length, weight and capacity. An increase in such practical work presupposes the availability of the necessary equipment. Remedial teaching in maths is necessary and should be specifically catered for.

2.5.5 Gaeilge
In teaching Irish, in areas, special difficulties, which may not be experienced to the same degree in other aspects of the curriculum, are created by the environment — parental apathy, inability to assist the child at home, lack of opportunity or desire on the child's part to hear or use the language outside school.

The formal teaching of a second language should be delayed until a
reasonable command of the first language is established. This committee recommends that a second language should not be formally taught until second standard at the earliest.

The teaching of Irish in disadvantaged schools demands a programme which will be simple, relevant to the children's environment and which will take their cultural values into account.

A programme should be produced with more repetition of basic vocabulary, without unnecessarily difficult sentence construction, with a greater concentration on simple narrative and without unnecessary proliferation of tenses.

There should be greater emphasis on other areas of Irish culture — music, drama, folklore, stories, legend, art, song, dancing etc.

2.5.6 Environmental Studies

The curriculum should be relevant to the child's environment. However an attempt should be made to broaden the horizons of disadvantaged children many of whom are virtual prisoners in their deprived environment. One way of achieving this would be to take them on frequent outings away from their own neighbourhood — not just on the traditional once-a-year school tour. Presenting these children with a wide range of new places, situations and experiences could not fail to have a beneficial effect. Transport could be provided by extending the present school bus service. If this were not possible, adequate finance would have to be made available to enable the school to make suitable alternative arrangements.

2.5.7 Art and Crafts and Music

These areas provide great scope for activity within the classroom and throughout the school. They help to make school life more pleasant and fulfilling for the disadvantaged child. Children with a low level of scholastic achievement may more easily attain a measure of success in these areas, thus improving their self confidence and self esteem. Basic handskills which are often poorly developed may be improved. Social integration may be promoted and developed. We recommend specialisation in these areas and a much greater provision of necessary materials and facilities.

2.5.8 Physical Education

Disadvantaged children are more likely to be retarded in their physical development. (Pringle — The Handicapped Child in School). A physical education programme should be designed to ensure that they reach their full physical potential. There are enormous diffi-
culties in implementing a worthwhile programme. There are not only the difficulties posed by a lack of specialised knowledge and equipment, which are common to most primary schools, but also the difficulty of lack of space in schools serving disadvantaged children in inner city areas.

There should be a school hall or gymnasium — properly equipped — and adequate outdoor play space. Transport facilities should be available for bringing children to suitable parks to enable them to take part in field games and sports.

2.5.9 Education for Living

A new type of course is also needed dealing with topics which might well be taken for granted in a more advantaged environment. It should involve basic instruction in such matters as home-making, general housekeeping, basic personal hygiene and cleanliness., cookery, budgeting, balanced diet, sex education, use of leisure time, safety in the home, first aid, road safety, the dangers of smoking, self-discipline, the need for different social behaviour on different occasions. Many disadvantaged children leave post-primary schools at the earliest opportunity to take up employment. Instruction in such areas in the primary school may prevent them from passing on to their children the poor standards which they themselves have experienced. In this type of course, use should be made, where possible of outside agencies.

Vocationally orientated courses would be beneficial particularly where transfer to post-primary school was being delayed.

The possibility of involving specialist 2nd level teachers in such courses and in other specialist areas should be investigated.

2.5.10 History and Geography

The texts should present their information in an interesting manner, well illustrated, with readable text and no difficult language. Simple booklets along the lines of similar publications in Britain and elsewhere — on famous people, buildings, events or other topics of Irish interest— should be produced and made available to the school library.

Generous grants should be available to assist teachers in the production of suitable slides and other materials required for the better presentation of these subjects.

2.6 Extra Facilities and Equipment

Having taken into account the demands of increased numbers of staff and the fact that money from local services is largely unforthcoming in areas of social disadvantage the committee decided to recommend that
the level of grants for schools which have a high number of disadvantaged pupils should be at least three times the level of grants to ordinary schools.

2.6.1 In addition to the facilities and equipment which an ordinary national school should have for P.E., Art and Crafts, etc. the committee felt that it was particularly important that disadvantaged schools have adequate well equipped and designed play space. The school hall and/or gym should provide facilities for recreation as well as for the implementation of the school programme.

2.6.2 The committee also feels that it is desirable that extra suitable and secure display and storage space should be available both for books and other educational aids.

2.6.3 It recommends that there be a withdrawal room for disruptive or overtired children and facilities for the tuition of individuals or small groups of children outside their normal classrooms.

2.6.4 Many major studies of disadvantaged have pointed to the disadvantaged child's lack of contact with, and access to, books. Steps must be taken to create situations which will compensate for this. Books should be readily accessible to the disadvantaged child.

The content of these books should be interesting and the pupil able to relate it to his/her own experience. In recognition of the fact that books are expensive and therefore low on the priority list of parents trying to rear children on low incomes in underprivileged areas, finance must be made available to provide library facilities for disadvantaged schools. Paperback would in many instances, be more suitable for the school library than expensive hardback books.

The committee feels that there should be teacher and pupil involvement in the selection of children's books for the library services. It is unsatisfactory that the local library should be working in isolation from the school. Close liaison between the local library and the school must be established. Mobile libraries could quite easily be routed to visit schools in disadvantaged areas, on a regular basis.

Generous grants are necessary to enable disadvantaged schools to build up their own school/class libraries. Enough money to purchase one book per child per year would be an acceptable start.

Since books play such an important role in school work it is imperative that the present Free Book scheme be expanded to ensure that disadvantaged pupils do not have to pay for any books.
Supplementary grants for writing materials would also be necessary since most children in such schools would require books and materials free.

2.6.5 The committee felt that special provision in relation to security should be made in such schools since many of them have a higher than average incidence of vandalism.

The provision of a caretaker in all such schools would be essential in this regard. The immediate repair of all damage to such schools and a high level of general maintenance and decoration is required to provide a pleasant school environment and positive learning conditions for the children.

3. ASSESSMENT SERVICES
3.1 The committee considered the child care educational services available. They found that one of the greatest areas of weakness from the teachers' point of view was in the inadequacy of the assessment services available.

Accordingly, the committee decided to re-state the 1974 recommendation of the Psychological Society of Ireland\textsuperscript{17} that a comprehensive schools' psychological service be created. The committee feel that this is needed, especially for primary schools serving disadvantaged children, and should be funded by the Department of Education.

3.2 The committee also feel that special efforts should be made to eliminate the present long delays in obtaining psychological assessment of emotionally disturbed and/or seriously disruptive disadvantaged children, and that sufficient number of places be created in special schools for these children.

4. WELFARE SERVICES
4.1 The committee also surveyed the social welfare support services available to these children, c.f. Appendix 1.

4.2 It found that the provision of such services varied considerably. Despite the fact that the quantity and variety of services available in the
greater Dublin area are better than anywhere else they are unable to cope adequately with the demands placed on them.

4.3 The committee also noted the problem, particularly in the greater Dublin area, of the duplication of services and the lack of clear definition of the role of some of the services. The fact that some of the services, such as the assessment services, are partly financed by the Department of Health and partly by the Departments of Education and Justice, leads to duplication and unnecessary bureaucracy in dealing with individual cases. It also leads to difficulties in ensuring that the required services reach the children most in need. Voluntary and state agencies which neither co-operate nor provide consistent advice may add to, rather than relieve, the children's problems. Duplication of already inadequate services is obviously extremely wasteful.

4.4 Having considered the variety of agencies which deal with child care services and the difficulties which result from the lack of co-ordination and co-operation between them in some areas, the committee recommends the adoption of the "Care" recommendation\(^\text{18}\) for the creation of a National Council for Child Care which would have a statutory responsibility to ensure that services were available where required.

5. SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS
5.1 The committee considered the effects of low socio-economic factors and recommends that, within the school, attempts should be made to offset some of these.

5.2 Diet
The committee feel that school meals, where they are being provided, are inadequate. A lunch of cold milk and unsavoury and often unappetising sandwiches is of little benefit to a child who very often has not had a breakfast.

While the committee does not have the expertise to advise on nutrition, it recommends that:

(i) a hot meal with some element of choice should be provided;
(ii) prior to organising a full hot meal for schools, a choice of hot drink — tea/coffee, soup, etc. and fruit should be added to the present meagre serving.
The committee does not consider it part of the duty or responsibility of the teachers to provide a meals service in schools.

It recognises that the preparation of meals requires kitchen and dining staff and facilities in schools. This should not pose insurmountable difficulties. If an existing vacant area could not be converted to a kitchen then obviously it would be necessary to build one.

5.3 Rest

Many disadvantaged children sleep 4 or 5 or more to a bedroom and very often their sleep is interrupted by the noise from other families living above, below or beside them. Unrestricted and unsupervised television viewing quite regularly results in many primary school pupils not getting to bed before "Closedown". It is also an unfortunate fact that some disadvantaged children from underprivileged areas are involved in petty thieving and vandalism until quite late into the night.

In the light of these factors it is not surprising that a significant number of disadvantaged children present themselves for school in a semi-exhausted state which is certainly not conducive to learning.

Short of building a dormitory, it is hardly within the capacity of the school to compensate for this lack of rest, but nevertheless this committee feels that some provision should be made for the most extreme cases.

Parents should be educated to understand the problems which inadequate rest can lead to during the child's formative years.

5.4 Clothing and Footwear

Unemployment and low income, as has been stated elsewhere, are prevalent in under-privileged areas, and therefore their associated problems, such as the lack of proper clothing and footwear, are seen more clearly.

A system of vouchers for the purchase of clothing and footwear used to operate some years ago. This scheme should be re-activated.

The teacher will quite often be the first person to notice a family with these problems and it is important, therefore, that he/she should be able to bring necessitous cases to the attention of the welfare agencies.

5.5 Health and Hygiene

The homes of disadvantaged children are often dirty and unhygienic. Parents in these homes have not themselves been educated to appreciate the need for basic cleanliness and personal hygiene. They cannot therefore be held to blame for not passing on to their children what they have not learned themselves. Our schools should compensate as we
have said elsewhere in this report, by emphasising hygiene in the school programme. Cleanliness and hygiene cannot, however, be inculcated in the un-sanitary, unclean ambience of many of the schools in disadvantaged areas. Sub-standard conditions in many disadvantaged schools should be brought up to the minimum level acceptable in most homes.

6. ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMMES
6.1 Parental illiteracy creates special problems and is often the major block to children getting help and encouragement at home. The parent in attempting to hide his own illiteracy may direct the child away from books and learning. Adult education programmes are essential in under-privileged areas and they are too important to be left solely to voluntary organisations.

6.2 The committee recommends that suitable courses should be designed and established for the parents of disadvantaged children and that these courses should be centrally organised and managed and parents given incentives to persuade them to attend.
SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 1: The committee recommend the following as objective criteria for the identification of disadvantaged children:
   (i) unemployment/low family income
   (ii) overcrowded/substandard housing
   (iii) mentally retarded, disturbed or physically handicapped
   (iv) estimate of educational disadvantage
   (v) estimate of parental attitudes

Section 2: The committee recommends that special educational provision should be made in schools where a high number of children have been designated disadvantaged and that the special provision should include:
   (1) a programme of home/school liaison
   (2) pre-schools
   (3) special staffing arrangements
   (4) specialised training for the teachers
   (5) adaptation of the curriculum
   (6) extra facilities and equipment

Section 3: The committee recommends the establishment of a comprehensive Schools' Psychological Service.

Section 4: The committee recommends the creation of a National Council for Child Care to oversee and co-ordinate existing child care social services.

Section 5: The committee recommends that within the school attempts should be made to offset the effects of low socio-economic factors in the children's environment.

Section 6: The committee recommends the establishment of suitable adult education programmes for the parents of disadvantaged children.
FOOTNOTE REFERENCES

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6. The Amended Scheme of priorities for housing — Dublin Corporation.
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17. A Psychological Service for Schools — a policy document by the Psychological Society of Ireland, 75 Merrion Square, Dublin, 2, issued November 1974.
18. Care - Campaign for the Care of deprived children, 244 Harold's Cross Road, Dublin, 6.
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APPENDIX 1

1. Health Boards
   Director of Community Care
   Public Health Nurses
   Psychiatrists
   Psychologists
   Speech Therapists
   Social Workers
   Child Health Clinics
   Pre-school Day Nurseries
   School Health Inspection

2. Dublin Corporation
   Social Workers etc.
   Social Service Councils
   School Attendance Officers

3. Department of Education — Schools' Psychological Service

4. Department of Justice
   Court Probation Officers
   Juvenile Liaison Officers


6. Dyslexia Association of Ireland

7. Care — Campaign for the Care of Deprived Children

8. St. John of God Guidance Clinics

9. Church of Ireland Social Services

10. Home Help — Little Sisters of the Assumption

11. Society of St. Vincent de Paul

12. Catholic Social Service Conference

13. Catholic Social Welfare Bureau

This list is not comprehensive.
APPENDIX 2

Extract from "Scheme of Priorities for Housing" used by Dublin Corporation.

Degree of Overcrowding:
5.6 Minimum Standard — Bedroom accommodation:
   Man and wife (only) ......................... 1 bedroom
   Man and wife, 1 or 2 children under 10 years ...... 2 bedrooms
   Man and wife, 3, 4 or 5 children under 10 years .... 3 bedrooms
   Man and wife, 6 or more children under 10 years ... 4 bedrooms
   For each two persons of the same sex over 10 years . 1 bedroom
   subject to a maximum of 7 persons. ............ 3 bedrooms
   over 7 persons ............................... 4 bedrooms