wares to teachers and you will find informed reviews of the various programs. The sort of programs for young children available for the BBC Microcomputer include the usual 'Number Fun' type and many basic literacy programs. Many useful programs are available from the British Micros In Primary Schools organisation. One is 'Cat and Mouse', which helps the child become familiar with the keyboard layout of the BBC Microcomputers.

As children get older so the number and range of programs increase. Programs for the 8 to 11 age group vary in complexity and quality, and most concentrate on reinforcing basic skills and stretching the child's ability. This age group acquires special interests such as music and foreign languages, which can be taught by computer. Most computers have this type of program available.

In the secondary school age group there is a plethora of programs. The only way to wade through them and to pick out the best is to speak to your child's teacher. It is important that your child's home study is not in contradiction to the work he is getting at school and most teachers will prove very helpful in guiding you towards the right type of program.

A further category of educational computer programs is primarily concerned with children under 13. At this age children are still discovering how to learn, and programs which induce them to use the computer to discover the world for themselves must prove very valuable. The best known program is LOGO, and a version of this language is available for computers made by Atari, Tandy, Apple, Texas Instruments, Research Machines, Commodore and IBM. Versions are promised for the BBC and for Sinclairs, but they have yet to materialise. Using this program a child, between the age of 6 and 12, is encouraged to explore the computer's drawing power (and, in turn, geometry) with a 'turtle'. The child discovers how to teach the turtle to remember procedures (programs) and on some implementations the child progresses until he or she can draw a fantasy world of 'sprites' on the screen. Using this program children are actually teaching themselves the basic laws of mathematics, and much has been claimed for the power of this program to teach mathematical and spatial concepts.

It is not easy to choose good educational software, because there is so much to choose from. It is a good idea to attend one of the many computer exhibitions that are periodically held around the country. Here you will be likely to find both manufacturers and program writers showing off their wares, and you will have a limited opportunity to see, try and compare programs. The shortage of good programs that satisfy both educational and computing requirements is not likely to last for long. Each month more programs emerge that are likely to provide a valuable stimulus to your child's development.
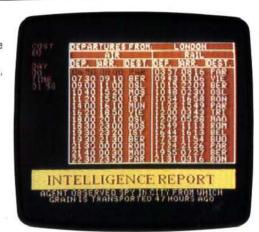
The Secret Agent

YOU ARE AN AGENT FOR MI6

YOUR MISSION IS TO CATCH A NOTORIOUS SPY

HIS AIM IS TO ELIMINATE YOUR AGENTS IN EACH CITY

There are many educational programs now on the market. This one is called Secret Agent and is published by Heinemann. Your mission is to catch a notorious enemy spy on the loose in Europe before he eliminates all your agents. The clues to his whereabouts have to be deciphered before you can catch up with him. The chase is on...

The master spy may only be apprehended in a city – but he won't stay in one place for more than a couple of hours. Once you think you know where he is, you have a choice of travelling there either by train or aeroplane. You have to decide for yourself whether speed is more important than cost

A light will flash on the map whenever a message is sent from one of your agents, showing the city from which it is being sent. If your agent is eliminated, the message will be intercepted before you can receive it. You may then wish to hire a new agent, but you will have to pay for it

Informers are happy to help you by selling their reports, but these will be sent in code so you may need to appeal to the boffins in London for help. At the end of the game you will have learnt the names and locations of all the European cities, and developed an understanding of timetables and the knack of careful budgeting

IT TOOK 27 DAYS 13 HOURS TO CATCH THE SPY

IT COST YOU £7703

You are dismissed from MI6