

teaching of spelling to ensure accuracy in the use of everyday words. The greater part of the ordinary written vocabulary comprises a relatively small number of words, capable of concentrated teaching. Spelling has been the target of criticism for many years, and it is questionable whether the general level of attainment has much deteriorated in recent years. Reports from various sources are conflicting; nevertheless constant care on the part of teachers will be needed as long as so many of our words are spelt in the clumsy, unphonetic way of present usage. Reform in this connection should be more than a pious hope. Writing is another subject that has been receiving special attention. The average primary school child writes legibly and well, but it is stated that the writing deteriorates with speed, a fault that should not arise if the proper muscular arm movement is progressively developed. Some schools are trying the Palmer system which lends itself to speed, but is not so attractive in appearance. Reading is perhaps one of the best phases of English in our schools, and is becoming richer in scope with improving library facilities. The new syllabus in arithmetic is being more successfully treated as all the standard class textbooks, except one, are now in use by the pupils. The essential features of the prescriptions are a sound knowledge of basic facts, and their application to the number requirements of everyday life. There is a wealth of practical work, which adds interest. It is necessary, however, to ensure thorough memorization of tables, and accuracy of computation, for which practical work cannot be a substitute. The new syllabus contains all the essential features of the old, but the merely pedantic and unreal exercises of the traditional type have been eliminated. Within the restricted scope, greater proficiency should be attained. After the syllabus has been tried thoroughly for at least a year, the time should be opportune for systematic surveys to be undertaken to check up the progress of the children, and to compare the worth of the new syllabus with the old.

REVISION OF THE SYLLABUS

The complete revision involves a vast amount of work, which has been apportioned to a number of committees in the four main centres. These committees consist of Inspectors, teachers, and specialists in various fields. The thanks of the Department are due to all members for the onerous work already undertaken. Arithmetic, health, and written English have been completed. The committees on oral English, spelling, and social studies have almost completed their work, and committees will shortly undertake the revision of reading, recitation and literature, writing, nature-study and elementary science, and needlework. A new tentative art scheme is being tried out in selected schools. As the committees complete their reports, they are issued to all branches of the New Zealand Educational Institute, and to the inspection staffs for comments, which are considered before the new syllabus in any subject is compiled. The new syllabus in health and temperance which is in operation is eminently practical, being intended to inculcate a healthy way of living.

The whole task involves several years' work as the members of the committees have their ordinary duties to perform, and the difficulties of printing textbooks are so great that the work cannot be hurried. Handbooks for teachers are also to be prepared, and it is hoped that finally the new prescriptions will appear in the form of handbooks of suggestions for teachers—*e.g.*, English, all phases for all classes, arithmetic, social studies, &c.

Large quantities of material and equipment are needed in conjunction with new courses of work. A good beginning has been made in supplying schools with apparatus and toys for the infant classes, and also with aids for practical arithmetic in the standard classes.