

their pupils at the end of each year. It is indeed open to the Inspector, in cases entirely exceptional, to examine pupils individually to ascertain their progress, but if the head teachers do their part efficiently such action on the part of the Inspector would necessarily be rare.

There are now in this district two "term" examinations and one "annual" examination, each succeeded by a holiday. The examination results, together with notes on attendance, punctuality, and conduct, are entered on school progress cards, which are, or ought to be, sent to parents for their perusal and signature. The results are, moreover, recorded in an examination register, which, along with the examination tests and answers, must be shown to the Inspector when he visits the school. It will hence be seen that, if the teachers do their work thoroughly, there should be little cause for complaint. But there is, unfortunately, already reason to distrust the judgment of some teachers. The marks awarded for some of the subjects, even by experienced teachers, in connection with both the proficiency and the annual examination, make it perfectly clear that the tests were absurdly easy or the requirements were absurdly low. This we say without prejudice to the majority, whose soundness of judgment, in view of the marks awarded, we have no reason to doubt. Considering the profound importance of every form of examination, which, indeed, lies at the root of school progress, we would here express the hope that our teachers will make it a matter of conscience to see that the process of intellectual stocktaking is just and thorough, and that the resultant balance is wisely heeded.

The proficiency examinations were conducted at the close of the year by the Inspectors in person at the larger schools, while at the smaller schools they were supervised by the head teachers, to whom the various examination tests had been sent. The Committees were invited to appoint some one to represent them at the examination, and some of them did so. Others objected, reasonably enough, on the ground that their daily occupation monopolized their attention. For the satisfaction of all concerned it will hereafter be necessary, where a second supervisor cannot be found, to require the attendance of proficiency candidates at central examinations.

**SOME SUBJECTS.**—The teaching of reading, the most important of the primary-school subjects, rightly absorbs much of the teacher's time. In its initial stages the subject is on the whole well taught by a systematic application of the principles of phonics; and there is little doubt but that in this way progress is rapid and sure. In the upper classes correct utterance and a fair degree of expression are secured. When, however, it comes to the great purposes for which the subject is taught—the acquisition of knowledge, the cultivation of the imagination, the stirring of the emotions, and the strengthening of the will—one can speak with less assurance. How seldom does one hear a first-class lesson given to a higher class! The reason is at hand. The reading lesson requires more preparation than any other, and it receives less. To the intent that this lesson should be looked upon, as far as possible, as literature to be approached by the pupils with the understanding heart, we give at our proficiency examinations, as a test of intelligence, a fairly long piece of prose for interpretation. With respect to handwriting little need be said; in too many schools it is not taught. Pens are held in any fashion, copybooks lie at any angle, and bodies assume shapes painful to see. This is no travesty; it is fact. There are, of course, exceptions, but they are not very numerous. The reason, doubtless, is that the right conditions for the production of good writing in school are irksome both to pupils and teachers. The irksomeness must be faced. The subject of composition has maintained and bettered the good standard attained last year, and it will continue to improve in proportion to the degree in which it is made auxiliary to instruction in other subjects. It should daily be used for the expression of the pupils' thoughts on geography, history, nature-study, elementary science, the reading lesson, and general experience. Once again we would impress upon teachers the possibility of the avoidance of blemishes of form by making sure that the pupils are able to spell the words used in all lessons given. The quality of arithmetic, which was adversely commented on by the Inspectors at the beginning of the year, recovered itself towards the close. In the course of their visits to the schools the Inspectors noted again and again two outstanding defects: (1.) In the initial stages of instruction numbers and their relations were not thoroughly impressed upon the children's memories. It is not enough that relations and results should be understood; they must be remembered, else progress will be for all time completely barred. (2.) Many teachers failed to recognise the existence of short and neat methods, and as a consequence the children lost themselves in a maze of figures, which in themselves are but the tools of thought. Physical and mathematical geography have, we are glad to say, improved during the year. At almost all the schools practical work is done and suitable records are kept. Of history, political geography, elementary science, and handwork we speak below.

**AIM OF THE SCHOOLS.**—Is there any unity of purpose in our endeavours? Yes, certainly. Our endeavour is to make the lives of our children purposeful, so that as they grow up they may be receptive, perceptive, and reflective, and, when they have grown up, good and efficient citizens. This unity of purpose is, of course, secured by a diversity of means. First we endeavour to develop in our children what may be termed the civic sense—restraint, self-respect, consideration for the feelings of others, and a just pride in society, country, and race. This is done by the discipline of the school and playground; by the practice of military habits and exercises; by appeals to history and to the onward march of the men of our blood. The æsthetic sense, too, is developed by the practice of singing, drawing, recitation, physical exercises, and gardening. An effort is also made to enable our pupils to appreciate at its true worth their birthright as heirs to the ages, by bringing under their notice, through the medium of the school library, the readers, and the *School Journal*, some of the treasures of history and of literature. Their kinship with nature is so far recognised that they are led to know something of her ways and her secrets; and we have reason to know that through the agency of the schools many a child is now forming a friendship with nature that will last his life long. As our children have to act, think, and live in a world that is daily becoming more real, much of our effort must be concentrated on the de-