

**PHONIC DRILL.**—The charge is frequently levelled at our schools that sufficient care is not taken to cultivate in the pupils a refined habit of speech. We are afraid there is some justification for this charge. A large proportion of the children when they enter our schools have already acquired habits of slovenly speech and defective methods of breathing in connection with the organs of speech. Many teachers seem to overlook the fact that the speaking mechanism itself has got a defective bias, which can as a rule be best remedied by a course of phonic drill. The vocal organs must be exercised or drilled in such a way that they acquire the power of producing pure vowel and consonant sounds. Intelligent and systematic practice in correct speaking will gradually overcome such common defects—the result largely of the child's surroundings outside of the school—as distorted vowels, the clipping of words, and the smothering of certain verbal endings; but such practice must be based on a knowledge of the elements of phonics.

**WRITING.**—This subject has been on the whole carefully and intelligently taught. In the majority of our schools the lessons are becoming less aimless. The teacher realizing that it is not sufficient to require the pupils to make a faithful drawing of the headline, aims at more than that. He decides beforehand that a certain element or combination of elements of writing require special attention in the lessons, and insists that the pupils' efforts are concentrated on those difficulties. Hence we find the blackboard, as it should be, more often used to illustrate common defects. Where transcription-books are used in addition to copy-books we should like to see entered in them exercises specially framed to remedy certain errors, and to emphasize by repetition certain common difficulties. A few of the teachers that use blank exercise-books in place of copy-books do not exercise sufficient judgment in selecting the copies set on the blackboard. They are not as carefully graded as they might be, and too many difficulties are not infrequently crowded into one headline. We are of opinion that before a teacher substitutes blank books for copy-books he should plan out beforehand a well-graded series of lessons of his own, and make a thorough study of the style of writing he intends to adopt. It is gratifying to note that it is becoming a more common practice for the teacher to have the headlines written on the blackboard before the school-work commences for the day, and also that greater care is being taken to see that the headlines are in strict conformity with the system of writing taught in the school. A noticeable and serious weakness in a few of our larger schools is the absence of a definite standard of method and treatment throughout every department of the school. It should certainly be the duty of the headmaster to satisfy himself that from the P. classes to Standard VII the writing is so graded that no class has to unlearn what has been previously taught and practised in a lower class, and that there is no break in the continuity of the work. While we are pleased to be in a position to report that the supervision of the pupils' general clerical work has been closer and more insistent than previously, we would like to point out that on account of a lack of such supervision the use of pads instead of slates is likely to be productive of writing wanting in uniformity and neatness. We should also like to emphasize the importance of regular pen drill, which we are convinced does not receive the attention in the lower classes that its importance merits. A slovenly way of holding the pen is generally acquired in the lower classes.

**DRAWING.**—There has been a decided improvement in the finish, accuracy, neatness, and systematic arrangement of the freehand drawings in the drawing-books; and there also has been more care displayed in the grading of the copies for each standard. Far more discretion might be shown on the part of some teachers in the selecting of suitable copies. The designs chosen are not such as will tend to cultivate freedom and boldness of style, being small and scrappy in character, and unsuited for the practice of such essential principles as proportion, balance, repetition, and radiation. The treatment of geometrical drawing has been somewhat disappointing. The problems certainly are, as a rule, neatly and methodically entered in the drawing-books, and in most cases are regularly taught; but the pupils are not generally required to memorize even the more important problems. Unfortunately, there is a tendency in this and other subjects to avoid the drudgery of memorizing, as if memorizing was synonymous with cram. In school, as in the world, uninteresting work must sometimes be done, and the sooner the pupil is taught to recognize this fact the better it will be for him in his after life. Moreover, it is not cram to fix in the memory what has previously been intelligently explained and thoroughly understood. In regard to design-drawing in the higher standards, a little more scope and encouragement might be given to the pupils to exercise their own originality. This subject lends itself to what should be one of the essential aims of education—the creating and strengthening the child's power of initiative.

**SPELLING.**—The efficiency of this subject varies considerably. If we were to judge from the results of our special tests, we could not do otherwise than conclude that spelling and dictation are, on the whole, particularly well taught; but when we examine the general spelling that occurs throughout the ordinary school-work we are forced to report that frequently there is a great falling-off in the general spelling, which does not compare at all favourably with the set work. This weakness is probably due to the fact that many teachers unduly confine their attention to the words in the Reader. It might well become a more common practice for the teacher to draw up (apart from the text-book) lists of common words which his experience must have taught him are stumbling-blocks to the average pupil in his general clerical work. More frequent practice should be given in the words the pupil is in the habit of using, and which he finds difficult to spell. This would necessitate the careful recording of all the errors noted in the composition essays and other written exercises. Some of our more experienced teachers are beginning to realize the valuable bearing of derivation as an aid to spelling.

**GEOGRAPHY.**—As a rule, mathematical and physical geography have been satisfactorily treated on the lines laid down in the syllabus, and the pupils answered very creditably indeed the tests in this subject, which were specially framed to guard against the learning of definitions and description by mere rote. We should, however, like to emphasize the fact that simple apparatus and other devices should be more generally used in the teaching of this subject. Political and commercial geography, on the other hand, is in a lamentably weak condition. Pupils who have gained proficiency certificates leave our schools with a woefully limited knowledge of this important branch of geography. For