

*School-grounds.*—These show, on the whole, a steady improvement. Some have advanced rapidly, either owing to natural advantages or through the enthusiasm of Committees, pupils, and staffs, and are tending to make the school a centre of interest and attraction for the entire neighbourhood.

*Schemes of Work.*—In many schools these are prepared with care and judgment, and form the groundwork and basis of intelligent instruction; in others, however, they appear to be thrown together with little or no guiding principle. Before setting out a scheme of work a teacher should have a clear conception of what he proposes to do in each subject in the various classes, of the advance to be made as each successive stage is reached, of the preparation any one stage forms for the next following, and of the correlation, either in teaching methods or subject-matter, of those subjects which fall into more or less kindred groups. The scheme, moreover, should be sufficiently exhaustive to enable an Inspector readily to follow its details and grasp its aims, and to provide adequate guidance for an incoming teacher when a change of staff becomes necessary. Some of the so-called "schemes" are little more than brief skeleton courses, of small value as an indication of scope of instruction, and quite useless as a means of gauging aims and methods.

*Promotion of Pupils.*—As in former years, we find that discretion shown in promoting pupils varies from school to school. In the more efficient schools promotions are carefully and wisely determined; in many of the less efficient, pupils are promoted with undue leniency. Teachers should realize that to move pupils into a higher class before they have mastered the work of the lower class is in the interest of neither the pupil nor the school. One or two years of faulty classification create conditions under which even the best teachers are powerless to make satisfactory headway, and not infrequently permanently injure the prospects of pupils.

*Oral Speech.*—In the revised syllabus issued last year a considerable amount of attention is directed to "speech-training," as "it should be recognized that the foundation of all the work in English is natural and correct speech." If speech-training is to be effective, and pupils are to learn to express themselves clearly, with reasonable accuracy, and with due regard to correct pronunciation, one of the first essentials is that the teacher should present a desirable model. And yet we find, in many cases, that the speech of the teacher is by no means beyond reproach, indicating lack of understanding in respect of what is required, the result being that pupils lose much of that experience which leads to the aesthetic appreciation of English literature and to that ease and facility in oral expression which depends so much on oral and aural training.

*Subjects of Instruction.*—Reading in general is improving, though in some schools the appearance made is far from satisfactory. The old standard reading-book is being gradually eliminated, having largely disappeared from many schools, its place being taken by a library well graded to suit the requirements of different classes. The principle of fitting the book to the child instead of the child to the book is gradually being applied. Improved methods of teaching reading in its earlier stages have been in use in the large schools for some years, and are gradually finding their way into the smaller schools. The more experienced and efficient infant-teachers have developed considerable skill in selecting suitable matter for blackboard lessons and appropriate illustration with coloured chalk, with the result that from the outset the children are interested, have their attention focussed on "thought-getting" rather than "word-saying," and early begin to make real progress. In many schools the plan is adopted, with considerable success, of allowing pupils to read silently under nominal supervision. The period devoted to silent reading, however, is not always effective. Teachers sometimes fail to realise that children must be taught to read so as to get at the "thought content" of the passage, and that to allow pupils to read silently without making any attempt to direct or test their efforts is merely to court disaster. And here we would add a word of warning for the benefit of those who are disposed to overestimate the advantages of silent reading and underestimate the value of reading aloud. The latter is one of the best methods we have of training our pupils in clear and distinct enunciation, and in combating the tendency to dull monotony of speech. Further, though it is often insisted on that comprehension is a necessary preliminary to effective expression, it is also true that a training in expression and modulation of voice is no small aid towards real understanding.

*Recitation:* In only a few schools is this subject really well taught and are pupils able to repeat the passages committed to memory with feeling, expression, and enjoyment. In general the selections are wisely chosen, but in a number of schools we still find pupils learning poetry and prose having no claim to literary merit. It is unnecessary to draw attention to the importance of making suitable selections, for in many cases these will be amongst the few passages studied and known by the pupils, either at school or subsequently. Further, it is of importance that pupils have some appreciation of the beauties of thought and setting appearing in the selections: this they do not always possess.

*Spelling:* But little change is to be recorded in this subject, and in an appreciable number of schools but little advance has been made. Where spelling has been systematically taught good results have been achieved, but in schools where reliance is placed entirely on word-building schemes unskilfully framed and imperfectly applied—and such conditions are by no means few in number in country districts—the outcome is altogether unsatisfactory. Many teachers appear to forget the need for constant revision of common words and rules dealt with in word-building courses, with the result that pupils in the higher classes frequently make mistakes in words the spelling of which should have been mastered during progress through the standards.

*Composition:* While in the larger centres this subject is well and successfully taught, in a large number of the smaller schools results are disappointing. The subject presents greater difficulty than perhaps any other in the curriculum, and it is only where teachers recognize its close connection, through oral speech, with practically all other phases of school-work, where ample use is made of the synthesis, analysis, and grammar schemes running through the English course, and where attention is constantly drawn to beauty and form of style and diction appearing in the reading-matter dealt with, that good results can be obtained. Speaking generally, we are of opinion that too much attention, in the upper classes, is paid to "form," and too little attention to the "matter" of the composition exercise. Many of the papers submitted at the S6 proficiency examinations, though grammatically correct, showed but little power of dealing clearly, forcibly, and (so far as may be expected from a child) exhaustively with the subject chosen. It was not an uncommon experience to find a candidate endeavouring, by repetition and the introduction of trivialities, not always pertinent, to present an exercise of sufficient length to satisfy the examiner.