

We are pleased to record that in many schools regular practice is being given in phonics. As a series of useful exercises on speech-training is now included in the insets in the latest addition of the "Live Readers," we advise teachers to use regularly the material thus provided.

It is not usual, but not altogether unknown, to hear pupils reciting poetry of which they do not understand the meaning. Comprehension and appreciation of the poem should always precede memorizing and recitation. We think that more use might be made, both in the reading and recitation of poetry, of the opportunity of cultivating a taste for beauty of expression, and in their selection of poems to be studied teachers should not feel themselves tied down to use those in the school-books, but should select from any source available only the best, as it must be remembered that in these lessons the pupils are laying up in their memories the beginning of a store of literary treasures which will be theirs for life, and also that it is possible by the use of unsuitable poems to create a feeling of dislike for poetry which it may be difficult to eradicate in later years. We again commend to teachers a careful study of the chapter on "The Teaching of English" in the "Board of Education's Suggestions" issued to all schools in this district.

*Writing.*—The writing in most of our schools is very satisfactory, but in some schools more intensive systematic instruction is necessary. Since the acquisition of the art of writing depends on accurate observation and faithful reproduction, it follows that pupils must be habituated to observe accurately and to reproduce faithfully, and that, if good writing is desired, the copy set for imitation must be of the best. Care should always be taken that the pupils do their writing under reasonably wholesome conditions. For no other reasons than those of hygiene, correct posture at all writing-lessons is of very great importance; and before a child can take up the correct posture it is necessary that the desk at which he sits should be suitable in size and construction. When writing in ink comes to be practised it is most important that all the writing-materials should be good. No angular system of writing should be taught, nor should microscopic writing be tolerated. A bold legible hand should be the first consideration; attention should be directed to the forms and proportions of the letters and figures; the letters in the same word should be properly joined; and the spacing between letters in the same word and between successive words should neither be cramped nor exaggerated. Teachers should insist on written exercises being done with the maximum degree of rapidity consistent with full legibility.

In the junior section of the school provision should be made in the time-table for a short systematic daily instruction in writing and figuring, accompanied with liberal blackboard illustration by the teacher, and followed by criticism of their individual efforts by the pupils.

As writing has been made a pass subject for the Public Service Entrance Examination, it behoves us to see that a solid foundation is well and truly laid during the primary-school course. Valuable suggestions for teaching writing are outlined on pages 102-3 of "Suggestions to Teachers."

*Spelling and Word-building.*—In a large number of our schools the teaching of this subject has been brought into line with modern ideas. During the year, however, frequent references to the absence of definite systematic teaching were made in our confidential reports. Those teachers who are experiencing difficulty in introducing method into their teaching, and who confine their attention almost solely to testing, are advised to study and adopt the "Progressive Speller," which makes provision for a systematic treatment of the subject as outlined in the syllabus. Every word in the spelling-list should become part of the child's vocabulary: this can be secured only if the word is presented in a suitable context. We should like to see the blackboard more freely utilized in the teaching of spelling and word-building than is the case at present. It is essential that the pupils' spelling-notebooks should be inspected daily.

*Composition.*—The majority of our teachers give this subject the attention which its importance merits, the effectiveness of the teaching being seen in the fluency of speech manifested by the pupils and in the very satisfactory character of the written essays. In a number of schools, however, the compositions are short and stilted, affording, in general, ample indication of the failure on the part of the teacher to provide opportunities for the development of the pupils' powers of oral expression. In schools where pupils are encouraged to discourse freely and question one another upon the subject-matter of the lessons, and on suitable current topics and events, little difficulty is experienced in securing freedom and fullness of thought and expression. The selection of topics for written essays is not always a wise one, the choice frequently being made without regard to the pupils' environment and experience. We have again to emphasize the fact that the art of speaking and writing correctly is acquired by familiarity with good models; selections from the works of great writers should be carefully studied by the pupils under the guidance of the teacher. In the essays of the senior division the weakness most freely commented upon during the year was the lack of attention to paragraphing and punctuation; here the reading-lesson, if judiciously utilized, should form a valuable medium for impressing the underlying rules, and should aid materially in eradicating this defect. Suggestions for the correction of essays outlined on page 41 of "Suggestions" are once more brought under the notice of teachers. In the majority of our schools grammar receives good attention, with very satisfactory results.

*Arithmetic.*—In the preparatory classes a decided improvement is noticeable in the teaching of number work. The value of a basis of sense-training and of work with concrete material is now fully recognized as a primary principle of infant-teaching. Teachers are to be commended for the zeal and ability they have displayed in constructing suitable material for individual work. In many schools, however, the number work could be made more interesting and real if the pupils were trained to apply number to their activities and environment. If blackboard illustrations and written impressions were used to aid the auditory impressions, the memorization of tables would be rendered more interesting and thorough. In connection with concrete teaching in number work it is essential that pupils should commit to memory tables summarizing the results of their practical work. We cannot too strongly insist that the best foundation of speedy and accurate arithmetic is the thorough memorizing of tables in the lower classes.

There are still some teachers who regard mental and written arithmetic as two distinct and separate subjects instead of two associated parts of the same work. Although a considerable improve-