

in the school course the pupils "mark time." While we are quite in sympathy with all efforts put forth to accelerate the progress of the brightest pupils through the lower classes of the school, yet we think that care should be taken that the duller and slower children receive the attention they deserve, and that their school lives are not made miserable by attempts to force them along at the pace of their more capable companions. The keener the teacher, the greater is the danger of undue forcing. A suggestion is offered that in our largest schools an alteration be made in the organization to permit of "retardates" obtaining special treatment. Instead of each assistant being placed in charge of a standard class as at present, an extra class or group of pupils might well be formed of those who constitute the "tail" of each standard class. This group could be specially taught by a qualified assistant until the members of it are fitted to take their places in the ordinary classes without being a drag on the work of the normal pupils. A modification of this principle could even be applied to all schools where there are at least two assistants. In a Grade 3B school, for instance, the first assistant might teach P, S1, and S2 average or normal pupils, while the second assistant could busy herself with a class—of smaller numbers, but one requiring special skill in handling—consisting of the average primer pupils and the backward ones of S1 and S2, and possibly a few from S3 and S4.

There appears to be no reason, moreover, why the infant-mistress in a large school should not to some extent supervise, for at least the first three months, the working of S1, so that she could follow her pupils some distance into the standard work. She would then be able to note at first-hand any weaknesses which had been overlooked in the primer department, and so guard against them in the future, render her work of preparation more efficient, and make the break from primer to standard work less marked.

It is, however, an encouraging sign that so many of our teachers now promote the more intelligent pupils at times other than at the beginning of the year; their efforts in this direction are worthy of commendation.

SCHEMES OF WORK, WORK-BOOKS, TIME-TABLES.—The schemes have improved as statements of the work which it is proposed to do and of the aims to be pursued in the teaching, but, judging from the "depths" from which the book is sometimes withdrawn when asked for, one often wonders whether the schemes are prepared rather to satisfy the Inspector than to serve as the source of the matter and the method of teaching. A comparison of the schemes and the work-book sometimes shows that the order in which topics appear in the schemes is not the order in which they have been taught, nor has the whole of the work outlined been covered in the time allotted. Young teachers should note that the time-table, the schemes of work, and the work-book are definite evidences to the Inspector of their personality and skill, and they should carry out faithfully what they have stated in writing to be their intention. It has been found necessary in a few instances to remind headmasters of the regulations, which provide that the assistants should co-operate in the preparation of the schemes of work in order that the individuality of the teacher may be evident in them. In the sole-teacher schools and in grouped classes there is often undesirable repetition, year after year, especially in such subjects as history, geography, nature-study, singing, and physical instruction. Schemes of work for sole-charge schools have been recently drawn up by the organizing teachers and supervised by the Senior Inspector. These are available to sole-charge teachers on application to the Education Board. Practically every teacher now keeps a work-book, which is more or less helpful according to the use made of it and the value placed upon it by the teacher. Some are the merest outlines of the week's work, while the most elaborate ones contain entries bearing on every lesson to be given during the week. Probably all that is needed is sufficient detail to enable a new teacher to carry on the work of the class or school with a minimum of uncertainty regarding what has been done. If the work-book is not an expanded statement of the scheme of work, and does not show that the aims and methods outlined therein are being applied, and that the specified work is being covered, it is not being used properly.

The time-tables are nearly always displayed on the wall, and are in general satisfactory in their division of time among the subjects, but it is doubtful whether they are adhered to as rigidly as the custom was. Some of the younger teachers have rather a contemptuous regard for anything that appears to hamper the freedom of either the teacher or the pupils. This is a mistaken view to take, and leads to desultoriness rather than to precision in teaching and learning. So long as the teacher is free to frame his own time-table, and is not required to carry out one made for him, it is not unreasonable to expect him to follow it faithfully, and it is in the best interests of his pupils that he should do so. Even under the Dalton plan, or other method of auto-education, a time-table prepared by the pupil is not incompatible with the best use of the time available.

EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOLS.—The schools in this district still maintain a high standard of efficiency. The town, suburban, and larger country schools are ably controlled and efficiently taught. We desire to record our appreciation of the enthusiasm and devotion to duty of the great majority of the teachers; rarely do we meet one who is undoubtedly slacking, even although the conditions under which some are teaching might to some extent condone laxity. There are very few teachers who do not appreciate the responsibility that rests upon them and the importance of their efforts in the direction of educating their pupils. The deficiencies that exist in the smallest schools are due to inexperience on the part of the teachers, and to the need for more frequent guidance from the Inspector or the organizing teacher. In a few of our large schools there are still to be found headmasters who make little endeavour to adopt modern ideas, and it is often due to them that teaching on the most modern lines is not done in the primer and junior classes. We still find the old method of teaching reading; a miscellaneous reader is used, all the pupils read the same passage, and the book is frequently reread two or three times. The pupils are required to learn to spell every word in every lesson, as in years long past. Standard I pupils are taught to work long addition and multiplication sums of the nineteenth century type long before they can deal readily with the numbers from 20 to 100. Formal grammar—the knowledge of noun, verb, &c.—is taught long before the pupils can frame simple sentences.