

Whilst mentioning the duties of head teachers we desire to point out that quite a large number of headmasters of Grade VII schools do not appear to make full use of the abilities of their assistants. The Grade VII assistants are probably the best treated in the profession. As a rule theirs is the smallest and the most highly selected class in the school. The pupils could and should work largely without aid. The first assistant, therefore, could reasonably be expected to relieve the head teacher of some of his duties, and thus at the same time give himself a training for the headmastership he looks forward to. He could, *inter alia*, (a) be made responsible for at least one subject—*e.g.*, arithmetic in the whole school; (b) conduct the term examination in some subject in all classes, or all subjects in some classes. Unless something like this is done there is danger lest the first assistant become self-centred and unprogressive. It is an absurdity that the head teacher should be burdened with a mass of detail when he has on his staff a highly qualified man who has himself very probably been a headmaster of no mean ability. Such a reallocation of duties would set free the headmaster for more valuable work.

Many head teachers also seem to be unaware of the interest which parents naturally take in the work of our primary schools. Such interest should be encouraged to the utmost if the co-operation of parents—that is, the public—is to be secured. In connection with every school a “parents’ day” might well be established, when parents might see the pupils at work. A great deal of unnecessary friction and misunderstanding would by this means be avoided, the parents would be led to see that their interest and co-operation were valued, teachers would become better acquainted with the parents of their pupils, and benefits would accrue to all concerned.

In every school, moreover, head teachers should keep a special file for holding the reports of visiting officers. At present it is impossible in practically every school to secure all the reports without considerable delay, and in many cases some of the reports cannot be secured at all. The file might well be supplied by the Board or School Committee, and on it should be clearly stated its use, and the fact that it must be placed before the Inspector immediately on his arrival at the school. The file should contain the reports for at least the last three years of—(a) the visiting Inspector, (b) the school medical officer (who might well write a short report after each visit), (c) the physical instructor, (d) the science instructor, and (e) the organizing teacher.

We note with pleasure the good training in teaching and class-management that pupil-teachers and probationers are receiving from the head teachers.

DALTON PLAN.—The Dalton plan, or auto-education, does not make much progress. Unfortunately, those best qualified to carry it out—*i.e.*, the best assistants in the large schools—lack room and equipment. It cannot be efficiently carried out with only a single text-book in a subject; nor can it be successfully adopted in a crowded room. Hence we find its most successful application in the country school, where it is possible to equip a library, and where the parents willingly contribute to outside shelters, seating, &c. Where conditions are favourable and enthusiasm present very fine results are obtained. Several teachers adopted the plan, some because it was a new idea and others because they considered it to be an easy method of teaching; many failed to make a success of it because they did not possess either the personality or the ability to carry it on. We are strongly of opinion that weak teachers who attempt the system are foredoomed to failure; only those possessing (1) the confidence of parents and pupils, (2) an original turn of mind, (3) unbounded enthusiasm, and (4) plenty of energy are likely to be successful. It may be said that in schools where the plan is working well neither parents nor pupils would desire to revert to the ordinary methods.

SCHOOL-GROUNDS AND COMMUNITY INTEREST.—School Committees, parents, teachers, and pupils in some districts take the keenest interest in their schools, and the building and its surroundings reflect the greatest credit on those responsible for their appearance. Many of these schools possess good gardens, which are both attractive and useful; they become objects of interest to the people in the district, and are used in conjunction with the teaching of nature-study and agriculture. But whilst recognizing the good work in this direction done in many schools we cannot fail to note the lack of interest taken by some teachers in their school environment. Many of these consider that when they have taught the children within the school their work as teachers is complete. In such cases the schoolroom is untidily kept, the interior environment is by no means attractive, while no efforts are put forth to beautify the grounds, or to arouse a community interest in the school and its welfare. Teachers might well reflect on this matter, and note that Inspectors consider it to be an important part of their work as teachers.

DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.—During the year the work of the secondary departments of district high schools has steadily improved, and in most cases has now reached a pleasing standard of efficiency. This is due to several causes, among which we may note the greater interest taken by the headmasters in the secondary work, the increased efficiency of the assistants and their employment of more modern methods, the guidance afforded by the pamphlet drawn up by the Senior Inspector, and the establishment of good class libraries, resulting in wider reading on the part of the pupils.

English.—We are pleased to note that, owing to the increased facilities for wide reading, a general improvement has taken place in the teaching of English, and especially of English literature. Not only do the pupils read more books, but they show a keener appreciation of good literature; and we have received some really good answers to questions set to test the pupils’ enjoyment as well as their appreciation of the selections read. Some teachers have been very successful in stimulating interest by having the pupils impersonate the various characters in the plays studied—a practice which we heartily commend. The quality of the essays often varies with the taste of the teachers, some of whom appear to be quite satisfied if the essay contains no grammatical errors. In too many cases the compositions of second- and third-year pupils do not show a sufficient advance in matter and style on the work presented by a large number of Standard VI pupils. This defect is probably due to a lack of efficient teaching in the art of writing, and a want of perseverance on the part of the pupils in producing, after repeated effort, work commensurate with the extra years of practice and study.