

their course of training, and in other cases the accommodation is such that it is impossible to avoid forming a certain number of very small classes. Many of the older school buildings were not very intelligently planned, and contain not only some rooms of huge size, but also some very tiny rooms, intended evidently to house drafts of pupils taken by a pupil-teacher from the larger classes. Until schools of this kind are remodelled it will be impossible to arrange classes of a more even size. As far as I am able to judge, little more can be done to increase the teaching staff until more adequate and more suitable accommodation is provided. The reduction of all classes to not more than forty pupils is, however, the Department's aim, and as a very large sum of money is being spent annually on remodelling unsuitable school buildings the number of classes of reasonable size is being gradually increased.

In my report of last year I drew attention to the lack of originality in the primary schools. During the year very little information reached me showing that much original work was being attempted by the teachers. I am told by some that our rigid syllabus, our rigid methods of inspection, and our rigid system of grading are responsible for this shortcoming, but I am inclined to think that these excuses are very considerably exaggerated, and do not explain the lack of originality. I am assured by the inspectorial staff that originality is encouraged in capable teachers, but that too frequently those of less capacity are inclined to flit from method to method and to concentrate their efforts in no one definite direction. Whatever may be the explanation the fact remains that little is heard of any original work beyond some attention in intelligence tests.

Attention to the rights and needs of the individual child has brought us to realize the necessity for differentiation in primary education, as well as in secondary and technical education. There are and always have been in our schools some pupils whose native intelligence is not sufficiently great to enable them to benefit by education along ordinary lines. Their powers lie in the direction of manual occupations rather than in the mastery of the three Rs. It is futile to attempt to prepare such pupils for avenues of employment that can be reached only through the medium of the Standard VI Proficiency Examination, yet they are quite capable of becoming useful members of society. A beginning has been made to establish special classes for such children, and it is most gratifying to note the skill they soon acquire in the use of their hands. It is remarkable, too, how the acquisition of such skill reacts on their power to advance in literary subjects. Such pupils are certainly enabled to advance to the limit of their capacity in such subjects when they are in a happy environment and doing work in which they can excel and which, therefore, yields them the maximum degree of satisfaction. I hope that it will be possible to extend such classes, and to establish them in the near future in all the main centres. As our public-school classes are reduced in size teachers will be enabled to give individual attention to those pupils of normal intelligence who have been retarded by some misfortune during their school career. Such pupils require only an opportunity to make up the leeway they have lost. If the country could afford it, this could be done most effectively in what are sometimes called opportunity classes, but it appears to me that our first care should be the education of those children who are of somewhat subnormal intelligence, and these can be educated satisfactorily only in classes specially organized for the purpose.

For many reasons, too, a revision of the syllabus appears desirable. It could be enriched not only in the direction of utilizing more freely training in handwork, but also by giving a stronger bias towards the study of English literature and towards the more practical side of elementary mathematics. Facility in English composition, both oral and written, has greatly increased in recent years, and teachers now secure as well-written composition in Standard II as was in former years thought possible only in Standard IV. There was a time when the syllabus specified six sentences in composition for a Standard III lesson. Our pupils in the higher infants' classes far exceed this allowance. At the same time there is no doubt that too much attention is being paid to the mechanical aspects of the teaching of English. Grammar has, in my opinion, far more than its rightful share of attention, and much time is still being wasted on the spelling of difficult words, words that are not in the last likely to enter the child's vocabulary for several years. More attention should be paid to good English literature in order that pupils before they leave the primary schools may be imbued with an appreciation of and a love for some of the finer work of our best authors. Time for this broader study of English can also be secured by reducing the amount of time usually allotted to arithmetic. This subject has been overdone in the past, and is still being overdone. It is, indeed, not too much to say that with many teachers it is the principal subject in the curriculum. We have already jettisoned a great deal of useless work in arithmetic, and I think there is still some lumber to be got rid of. The arithmetic taught in the primary schools is not a disciplinary subject, nor does it enable a child to develop a faculty for overcoming the financial difficulties he may meet with in after-life. Its content should, however, be closely related to life needs. Real life situations provide abundant material for even the most ardent arithmetician, and I think that in this direction the scope of the subject should be widened to include those simple practical problems in geometry that most men and women meet with in some shape or form. If the primary syllabus were modified along these lines—that is, in the direction of utilizing more fully the handwork and manual-training subjects in the direction of making the arithmetic more practical and more suited to everyday needs, and in the direction of widening the study of English—I think the primary schools would themselves advance a long way towards gaining some of the advantages which the junior high school is intended to provide.

The training of teachers is being very effectively carried on at the four training colleges. Some very fine work is being done by the students, many of whom attempt at the same time their University studies. This task proves in many instances a very heavy burden, and it would be much to the advantage of the young student if he could complete his University course before undertaking the specialized training at a teachers' training college. Towards the end of the year the Department