

## EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOLS.

The reports from the various Inspectorates show that the enthusiasm of the teachers has been well maintained in regard in both the mental and the physical activities of the pupils. The tone of the schools is the subject of very favourable comment. There seems to be a definite improvement in organization: classes are more frequently subdivided into groups, the teacher concentrating more on the weaker groups and allowing the more advanced to do independent work.

It is noted also that, in consequence of the refresher course conducted by Training College lecturers in the previous year, the standard of work in physical training and in art and craft work is definitely higher. A nicer appreciation of literature and particularly of plays and poetry is also evident.

In two respects our primary schools are severely handicapped—the lack of diversified libraries and of provision for creative manual work. The library should be the academic workshop of the school where the more advanced pupils could learn, with the minimum of guidance, the art of building up for themselves a body of organized knowledge on any topic. The creative genius of our children on the manual side needs greater opportunities for expression; our lack of special craft-rooms with suitable equipment remains an obstacle. The present manual centres do very good work with the pupils of Forms I and II, but the contact between these classes and the schools from which the pupils come is not sufficiently intimate, the work is consequently insufficiently diversified, and the periods spent at the work—*i.e.*, one a week—too infrequent for an aspect of education of such practical and cultural value. The Training Colleges are making a forward move in the subject of Arts and Crafts: to make full use of teachers so trained, our schools will need a measure of adaptation in design and equipment.

Inspectors have noted with satisfaction the attention given to the teaching of the principles of health and temperance. Instruction in the rules of safety on the highways and of fire-prevention is now a common feature in our system.

Character-training is, and always has been, one of the most important functions of the school. It, of course, is not and never can be a separate subject of instruction. Such training should inevitably flow from every school subject: every honest endeavour, every approach to accuracy and beauty in mental, manual, and physical activities, every gain in self-confidence and every consideration for the rights of others—all these are elements that go to the formation of character. No good teacher need complain of any lack of opportunity in this respect. It is not likely that an older generation will ever be completely satisfied with the character of a younger, yet our schools are doing good work, and there is little to show that our youth on leaving school do not compare in this respect quite favourably with those of other countries. Nor must the fact be ignored that the child spends but one-fourth of its yearly waking life at school; for the remaining three-quarters it is under the influence, beneficial or otherwise, but certainly potent, of an older generation.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION.

While the playground activities of the schools are well conducted and the natural instincts of the young for bodily exercise are satisfied, the position of formal and corrective physical training is not quite satisfactory. The present text-book is in many respects a radical departure from those previously in use, and shortly after its introduction the itinerant physical instructors were withdrawn. Teachers for the greater part untrained in the method failed to grasp the principles enumerated and lost faith in a system they never really understood. A few short refresher courses have been held; but, as the subject is at least as important as any other in the education of the child, matters will not be satisfactory till the teachers are thoroughly familiar with a suitable text-book through both study and practice and have their work supervised periodically by experts. The Training Colleges are doing good work in this respect, but not nearly as good as they might, since at the present time far too many of their students, coming direct from the post-primary schools, have not received adequate preliminary training in a similar system. Valuable opportunities are therefore lost through lack of a co-ordinated system of physical training extending throughout school life. We need a system planned with such care that every pupil will receive individually such attention as will guarantee that he will not leave school physically illiterate. In England a system has just been inaugurated whereby the itinerant instructors of any Education District will, if called upon, assist in organizing "Keep Fit" classes among the adult community. The aim is an A1 nation physically.

Swimming and life-saving have received much attention in many districts. Facilities for this work vary very much from district to district. Where such are available there is no subject in which greater enthusiasm is shown.

## INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS.

The intermediate schools and departments continue to do fine work with their Forms I and II. Such a school or department implies the consolidation of Forms I and II of neighbouring schools in one central institution where the numbers in these forms can be sufficiently large to enable classification to be made in various sub-forms, and where the staff can be composed almost entirely of specialists. Few who have seen such schools in operation