

During the war a complete revision of the primary-school curriculum was begun, and is only now nearing completion. It has been a process in which both teachers and officers of the Education Department have fully shared. The underlying aim has been to adjust the curriculum still further to the needs of children along lines that are generally accepted by educationists in Great Britain and in other countries. Already several revised syllabuses have been issued, and I have been impressed by the way teachers have sought to bring to their work the broader conceptions of teaching that the new syllabuses imply. In spite of shortage of staff and of class-rooms, many teachers are putting into operation new methods that rely less on direct instruction of the class as a whole and more on group work, discussion, and a variety of practical activities, all of which lead to true learning. Experiments in new and more mobile types of school furniture point the way to further changes in the class-rooms. Discussions on the revised curriculum have made it evident that teachers and Inspectors must re-examine the fundamental bases of primary education and discuss the practical outcomes. Arrangements for Inspectors and senior Headmasters to begin such discussions are now under way. They will help to ensure that real standards of achievement in keeping with the natural capacity and ability of each pupil are maintained. Every child, if he is to grow into a worth-while citizen in our type of community, must give the best of which he is capable in all phases of his work at school, and the work of the school must be organized so that he may do so. This is the true standard and will lead to better intellectual and emotional adjustment than attempts to impose an arbitrary standard on all children, no matter what their capabilities.

Post-primary Schools

In my report last year I dealt at some length with the important changes that have taken place in the nature and scope of post-primary education, and with the problems that face teachers in giving effect to these changes. During the past year steady progress has been made, and among teachers there is a growing realization that the much wider range of ability and attainment in the entrants to post-primary schools requires the development of different methods and techniques of teaching. It is probable that the well-tried and long-practised methods and organization continue to be satisfactory for the large number of pupils in the middle range of ability. At the moment I am particularly concerned with the pupils at the two extremes. Investigations have been made during the year by a committee of departmental officers into the problem of the child of high intelligence and methods of obtaining the best results from these pupils are being tested with selected groups in both primary and post-primary schools.

But the greater problem lies in the field of the pupil who is not as well endowed mentally as the majority, and I am pleased to report that the claims of these pupils are fully appreciated by principals and teachers. Greater provision has been made for tuition of a more practical nature to supplement and in part to replace the "book" learning for which so many are not equipped. More materials and facilities have been supplied to schools to enable this progressive development to be carried out.

Developments in this field during 1948 include the following :-

- (1) Additional staffing allowances have been granted in order to enable schools to develop more fully their services to children.
- (2) A new and more equitable system of incidental grant. This will relieve School Boards of the responsibility for the maintenance of school buildings and increase the amount of money available for the purchase of materials for the class-room.
- (3) An additional supplementary grant for the purchase of library books was made to all post-primary schools and the secondary departments of district high schools.