

sary. The study of English has also gained by the insistence of the more intimate connection of grammar with constructive exercises. It must, however, be recognised by teachers that a definite amount of grammatical knowledge is absolutely necessary before the pupils can gain an ability to engage with accuracy and facility in the construction of sentences. Only experience will enable the instructors to select a course that is essential, without burdening it with what in the primary course must be regarded as superfluous. This difficulty does not appear so great as one connected with reading. The spelling of the words and sufficiently correct intonation receive proper attention, and, in the lower classes, the attention to the meaning of the words and phrases does not call for adverse criticism. In the higher classes, however, teachers find that the attainment by the scholars of the ability to define, even generally, the meaning of the terms used is very difficult. The chief reason appears to be that into the text-books are introduced many extracts from general literature that are unsuitable for minute study by children whose experience of life and appreciation of literary expression in some of its aspects is necessarily greatly limited. The study of the reading-books will be rendered easier if the lessons are taken in order of their difficulty. Thus the training of the pupils in the easier lessons will prepare the way for the more formidable exercises. There is no doubt, on the other hand, that in some schools insufficient attention is given to the ideas and their expression in reading lessons, which too often take the form of verbal recitation, without an adequate accompaniment of thought.

With reference to the remaining subjects of the syllabus, the standard of the previous years has been maintained. The schools under sole teachers have presented more than the minimum requirements in elementary science, health, and nature study, and in the larger schools these branches have been made a prominent feature of the course. In geography the A course has been based on experiment and observation to a considerable extent, and the text-books have been used to supplement such methods. The B course in geography was not taken in any school, and this and history are being taken in alternate years as reading subjects. The Board, which supplies practically all text-books not required for home lessons, will provide the geography readers necessary so that this branch may be adopted during the present year. In drawing, owing to the existence of a teachers' instruction class during the year, greater interest in geometrical drawing and its application to carton work was apparent. There is room in a number of schools, however, for more practical and thorough instruction in instrumental drawing. The most successful work in this branch has been achieved by the pupils of the Hokitika School in correlation with the woodwork class.

I have, &c.,

A. J. MORTON, Inspector.

The Chairman, Westland Education Board.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 29th January, 1906.

We have the honour to submit our report on the schools of the district for the year 1905.

At the close of the last quarter the number of schools in operation under the Board's control was 210, a slight increase on that at the end of the previous year, due mainly to the opening of additional household or aided schools. The enrolment of children as shown by examination schedules was 19,590, a number slightly higher than that for 1904, and of these 18,556, or roughly 95 per cent., presented themselves on the occasion of the Inspector's visit.

The year just ended has been one of considerable anxiety for Inspectors as well as teachers. For the first time examinations were conducted on the lines of the new syllabus, and although we generally found in readiness in the larger schools all necessary exhibits, such as schemes of work and records of progress, there were regrettable instances in which teachers had not made themselves familiar with matters of very ordinary detail in the routine of their newer duties. Excuses for such omissions may be accepted once, but it is not to be expected that they can again pass current.

Examination of twelve hundred children belonging to private schools in various parts of the district from Rangiora to Ashburton kept one of our number busily occupied for some five weeks, encroaching so far upon our time that a day's leisure was practically an unknown luxury. Spare evenings became the subject of regretful recollection, but were outside the sphere of actual experience, and we were finally left without an opportunity of paying the ordinary separate inspection visit to two groups of schools—one on and around Banks Peninsula, the other comprising schools north of Waikari.

Under the new conditions examination of the largest schools can be carried out more quickly than before, but outside these the practice of testing classes by sample would merely complicate the day's arrangements, would fail to supply a reliable test of the work done, and would not be attended by any compensating economy of time. In a considerable number of schools, moreover (especially in those of the "sole charge" type), it is for the present expedient that the responsibility of classifying the children should rest with the Inspector. The teacher is in such cases freely consulted before a final judgment is formed, and may fairly be expected to accept and loyally abide by the decision arrived at. It has on occasion happened otherwise—a teacher leaving a district being tempted to abuse the privilege by making wholesale promotions of children notably unfit. Needless to say such ill-advised action does not find favour with his successor or with the officer who subsequently finds that time has been wasted and sound progress arrested.

In the temporary dearth of certificated teachers it has been found necessary to accept for the present, in a considerable number of the less lucrative positions and in the more remote schools, the services of candidates possessing only slender qualifications in the way of professional training or previous practical experience. A goodly proportion of these, whose education has been fairly liberal, whose personal influence over their pupils is sufficiently strong, and whose earnestness of purpose and diligent effort go far to compensate for other deficiencies, show themselves deserving of encouragement,