

COMPOSITION.—This is the single subject in which Standard VI did not show advancement in percentage of success during the year. The reasons are two—(1) the increase in the minimum required (to 40 per cent.) ; (2) the weakness in grammar. Again and again pupils were unable to distinguish phrases from clauses, or to pick out such relatively easy grammatical distinctions as adverbs and adverbial phrases. The teachers do not always sufficiently differentiate the formal part of composition from the material part. If they get an essay in which keen observation is shown, their natural delight should not obscure to them defects in grammar and easy spelling. The cards issued by the Department were distributed among the schools. Some teachers saw that each child was provided with a booklet containing a complete set. Such schools made manifest improvement, because to them the intention of the Department in the syllabus became more clear. In quite a number of schools the composition showed throughout all standards a great improvement, both in freedom and in originality. This was especially true of such as had given much attention to gardening or to nature study. It is evident that these subjects provide many topics that interest the child. Just as the very sight of appetising food makes the mouth water and the glands function more freely, so an interesting subject unties the tongue and sets the pen moving. This progress was especially noticed at Tuamarina, Waitaria, and the Convent Schools. Oral composition in Standards I and II is still capable of development. On the time-table of these standards in larger schools two half-hours for “conversation” may very well appear.

RECITATION.—Of the sixty-nine schools examined, fifty took place from “satisfactory” to “excellent,” a favourable summary compared with last year when forty out of sixty were so estimated. The thought was intelligently expressed, and the pieces had been more carefully studied as examples of English. By careful selection of matter the smaller schools may yet introduce more grouping of classes, and so save time. Here, as in reading, there were many signs of a diligent grappling with the “h” difficulty.

ARITHMETIC.—In Standard VI a slight improvement was observed, but there is still scope for great advancement. The lower standards continue to achieve much more satisfactory results. It must ever be understood that reading, writing, and arithmetic are the backbone of the school-work, and that handwork fails to justify itself if it fails to strengthen these three. Handwork is supposed to add delicacy to the fingers, precision to the observation, and keenness to the judgment. It is obvious, therefore, that if it attains its end it must react favourably on the three Rs. Probably much more may be done in the way of oral discussion of the method of working easy problems.

GEOGRAPHY.—The mathematical geography prescribed for Standard V was not always sufficiently taught. Some teachers practically discontinued map-drawing under the impression that maps were not required. This is a mistake. Map-drawing should still be regarded as an important part of geography, but children will not be required to produce at examination memory maps with minute detail. Then, again, such detail as is shown should be in accordance with the modern view—railways, large centres, produce, telegraphs, trade routes, distribution of animals and races of men, the regions traversed by navigators and discoverers. As the chemist distils the pure spirit from its gross admixture, so the teacher must distil his geography from many books and papers. For this subject, more than for any other, the teacher must be widely read, not that he may cram the child, but that he may know wisely what to reject. It may be remarked that the child’s natural desire for information need not be stifled altogether in the teaching of principles. The mind, like the body, has its appetites, and these are especially vigorous during the growing-period. Youth has a hunger for facts, and the teacher’s chief care should be to provide a sufficiency of the kind to thoroughly illumine his principles. Most of the schools have been furnished by arrangement of the Department with maps of the region within a radius of five miles of their location. These should be used to verify maps made to scale by actual measurement or calculation along the roads. It would be well if the larger schools could be provided with good boxes of labelled minerals to assist in the identification of rocks in their neighbourhood.

DRAWING.—The attention of teachers is called to the requirements under instrumental drawing. Model-drawing showed signs of strengthening. With reservation in respect of these two divisions, the subject merits nothing but praise, and where suggestions are made in regard to branches of this work it is rather with a view to indicating fresh lines of advance than by way of criticism. Pencil-work improved very much in firmness and vigour of outline, in design, and in correlation of nature study with drawing. There is a general consensus of opinion that children should be taught from the earliest stage to draw objects and not abstractions. In this respect many of the schools showed progress. Teachers may, however, make more of design with simple geometric forms such as the square, triangle, hexagon, &c. In this connection it may be noted that a design based on squares should not be necessarily made of squares. It is wonderful how far in matters of design some teachers (compared with others) will lead a child—just because they do not begin with the notion that a child’s size is an exact measure of its ingenuity. It is true that his intellect is not mature, nor his experience large, nor are his reasoning-powers fully developed, but the child can do an unexpected amount with his little capital. The Board has a number of small books of squared paper suitable for children in Class P ; in these, work of the above description may be done. The books are available on application. Some of the designs may be made in pencil and others in crayon. A box of greasy crayons is best, because the colours do not readily “smudge.” A. W. Seaby’s book on Blackboard Drawing (Nelson and Sons) is suggestive as giving ideas, *inter alia*, for filling a given space with ornament suited to or modified to suit the shape of the space. During the past year brush-drawing was much more extended in practice, and in several schools really creditable work was done, but as a rule children were limited to comparatively few elements. There is possible, especially in the higher classes, a greater use of natural objects as elements in brush-drawing and design. More use may also be made of tinted paper. Scale-drawing should not be treated too ponderously—*e.g.*, draw the plan and elevation of a brick or other model to scale ; draw a triangle, and increase its sides to double by scale ; draw a plate, its rim, and cross-section.