pupils before reaching Standard I, a practice which might with advantage be extended to the lower standard classes. We have long felt that the introduction of one or more additional reading-books in Standards I and II—*i.e.*, altogether three or four books per year—would in many ways be of great advantage to the pupils. The demand made on children at this stage in comprehending the subject-matter of the lessons is not great, so that there is ample time to increase the amount of the reading-text. The wider experience thus gained would create greater interest both for teacher and pupils, and the beneficial results would be apparent at each subsequent stage of the school course. In the upper classes, more particularly in the country schools, the matter presents greater difficulty. In these classes it becomes necessary to study the text with some fulness, so that the amount of reading-matter it is possible to overtake is relatively limited.

Comprehension of the reading-matter varies considerably from school to school, and in the majority of cases still leaves much to be desired. The objective of all teaching, so far as reading is concerned, is, or ought to be, the interpretation of written or printed matter, and any training which fails to realise or attain to this cannot be deemed satisfactory. In a few schools most encouraging results are obtained, the pupils showing an intelligent appreciation of the contents of their reading-books, including the poetry selected for recitation, and are able, moreover, to find fitting language for the conveyance of their impressions and thoughts. In others, however, though the meaning of words taken singly is often well known, pupils seem unable to explain the gist of a sentence in clear and appropriate language. The special and growing importance rightly attached to this phase of the reading-lesson justifies us in again referring to what has so often been mentioned in previous reports.

As an aid to both reading and comprehension it seems necessary again to draw attention to the need and importance of utilising the blackboard—a piece of apparatus which might with advantage be more freely used. A few of the more difficult words, or those suggestive of matters to which attention is needed, written quickly on the blackboard during the progress of the lesson, would furnish convenient material for rapid revision at its close. If we are to succeed in cultivating a taste for good books it is of the first importance that pupils should understand and be able to express the meaning of what they read. Moreover, scarcely any feature of the school-work has a more direct bearing than this on the writing of composition.

Spelling.—Improved methods of teaching spelling have received wider recognition during the past year, and the evidence supplied by the Inspectors' tests and by the written exercises in composition indicates that on the whole spelling is a strong subject in the schools of this district.

Writing.—In the majority of the schools this subject has received its fair share of attention; in others the quality of the slate-work and the condition of the copy-books point to the need of improved methods and closer supervision. In the upper classes the style of work in the exercise-books and in the examination-papers affords the best evidence of the progress made. We would again emphasize the importance of insisting on a correct method of holding the pen, and of a proper posture at the desk.

Composition.—In the lower portion of the school oral composition continues to receive intelligent and for the most part successful treatment. It is not at all unusual to find pupils in Class P and Standard I who are able to discuss suitable subjects with ease and freedom; and in Standard II those who make a most gratifying appearance in setting forth their ideas in writing. The work in Standard III, moreover, is on the whole well done, the exercises being generally free from grammatical errors, and showing evidence of teaching-effort which recognises the importance of a correct use of words, and of viewing the grammar and analysis lessons in the light of composition aids. In the upper classes, however, especially in the smaller schools, the results are not always so satisfactory. The length of the composition exercises should naturally increase with the age and school experience of the pupils, for in the upper classes greater facility of expression is or should be gained, and hence greater power of amplifying a subject acquired. In view of the short exercises so frequently submitted, this aspect of the work does not appear to have received the attention it deserves. A very important test of efficient teaching, so far as the upper classes are concerned, is the power to discuss and expand a subject with some degree of fulness, and a satisfactory response to such a test may be fairly expected from the finished product of a course extending over some six years.

Scarcely any feature of the school-work is of greater importance than freedom and accuracy of verbal expression. If we wish to explain to any one a matter of difficulty and are not clear about it ourselves, the net result is confusion. Conversely, if we are able to offer a clear and sufficient explanation, the probability is that the matter is fully realised and understood. So with children, if the child can give definite and accurate expressions to his thoughts he must have a clear conception of what he is discussing. Hence fulness and accuracy of verbal expression make for clearness of conception, dispel or at least minimise confusion of thoughts, foster mental activity, and by demanding sustained and systematic mental effort, stimulate intelligence and thought-power. Many teachers, though recognising this, fail to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by so much of the school-work—*e.g.*, oral answering in arithmetic, reading, geography, and nature study. The following questions and answers given at a recent examination will serve to show what is meant. *Question:* What do you understand by "the decay of the Baronage?"—*Answer:* Dying out. *Question:* What is meant by "He was making spasmodic efforts to smile?"—*Answer:* Very hard. To give full, and, as far as children can, accurate replies to these and similar questions, not only demands a highly necessary mental effort, but also requires the pupil to find grammatical and correct English with which to clothe his ideas, and so provides a very direct and useful training in composition.

In small schools the difficulty of finding time for this work, though a very real one, is by no means insuperable. Teachers resolute to reject all incomplete and inaccurate answers, and determined to accept only those worded with fulness, will be surprised at the rapidity with which the power of verbal expression will grow.

Arithmetic.—Though classes and even schools are occasionally found in which this subject fails to escape criticism, the general tendency is towards improvement. Accurate results are secured more