

and Mr. Burnside have in this respect earned my special thanks. Of late, more than usual of the Inspectors' time has been occupied by inquiries for the establishment of schools, complaints about teachers, and cognate matters, and this has accentuated the difficulty of overtaking all that was due from the Inspectors.

It is pleasing to note that an increasing number of the newly erected schools have been built in brick. It will be wise to continue this policy whenever building in brick is not much more expensive than building in wood. The saving in the cost of upkeep and the vastly greater durability of brick buildings make their provision in the long run distinctly cheaper to the community. With the increased staff now allowed for the larger schools, it will be advisable, as funds and occasion allow, to subdivide many of the larger class-rooms generally to be found in the larger schools. The ideal should be the provision of a separate room for each assistant teacher, but it will be impossible to undertake costly structural rearrangements so as to completely realize this ideal. Questions of lighting will also impose limits on rearrangement or subdivision of class-rooms that are otherwise desirable.

The Board will be pleased to note that the average age at which pupils pass from a lower to a higher standard class is getting lower. The average age of the pupils in Class P is this year six years and eight months, exactly a year less than the average was last year. It is here that the average age has been too high for a considerable time; if the lowering that has now come about is continued it must ere long reduce the age of promotion in all the higher classes. The age at which pupils are on the average promoted to Standard II is still on the high side, but it is four months below that for last year, and a further decline may be expected. The advance in the age at which pupils above Standard I are promoted to successive higher standards is quite normal.

The classification of pupils by head teachers continues to be satisfactory, and in the larger schools promotions are nearly always well earned. There have not been wanting, however, some cases of fairly numerous unmerited promotions in the smaller schools, especially in schools where the teachers in charge have been retiring or removing at the end of the year. This may prove a permanent weak point in this connection; it, unfortunately, creates a very serious difficulty for the teacher who succeeds, as correcting faulty classification is seldom a process that recommends a teacher to the parents of a district in which he is newly placed. I would appeal to all teachers who relinquish charge of a school at the close of a year, when the annual promotions are now made, to bear in mind the circumstances of those who step into their places, and to do their best by an honest and fearless discharge of the responsibilities imposed on them to make the advent of their successors free from unnecessary embarrassment and difficulty. At the risk of some repetition, I transcribe what Mr. Stewart writes on this topic:—

"Classification is generally satisfactory. The larger schools are the most carefully classified. This results, I think, from the longer experience and wider outlook of the head teachers in charge. There are, however, a minority of teachers who do not rise to the level of their responsibilities in this matter; they are not confined to one grade; but they have one characteristic in common—viz., lack of will-power and the determination to do what is best for their pupils, irrespective of outside influence. Parents have much to answer for; in small communities it is quite possible to worry a teacher—particularly a woman—and make life miserable by a series of petty annoyances. The threat is made, and not infrequently carried out, that children shall be sent to another school unless they are promoted; this may not lead to a reduction of salary, but it may to a reduction of staff, and is a very serious matter, not only for the teacher, but for the school. The teachers to whose schools such children are sent ought most carefully to consider each individual case, and ought not to put them in a higher class without thoroughly testing their capacity and knowledge, and being conscientiously convinced that the former teacher had made a mistake. Any attempt on the part of a teacher to increase his roll by neglecting to take such a course is, in my opinion, very reprehensible. If the reason of a child's removal were clearly stated on the transfer form, the teacher to whom it was presented would be in a position to make a just estimate and take a proper course. The greatest mistakes are made in promoting from Standard IV upwards. It sometimes happens that a child has a sufficient verbal memory to pass an examination, yet his intelligence and mental development are not such as will enable him to benefit by promotion. In these cases the teacher should remember that he is not obliged to rely solely on examinations, but that he must take into consideration 'the general character of a pupil's work during the year.' Many teachers complain of frequent unpunctuality and absence on the part of pupils; these should be carefully weighed when promotion has to be determined—unpunctual and irregular children advanced to a higher class not only do unsatisfactory work themselves, but by necessitating an extra amount of attention on the part of the teacher delay the progress of the regular and punctual children of the class. If parents and School Committees clearly realized what a serious injury is done their children by too rapid promotion, made without reference to mental development, they would unite to support the conscientious teacher in this most important part of his work."

The amount of migration from school to school that obtains even in country districts is considerable, and in the large city and suburban schools it is really surprising. Repeated inquiry has shown conclusively that in the average city and suburban school more than a third, and often not far short of one-half, the pupils on the roll enter and leave every year. But for the general uniformity in the discipline and work of the schools this would be a very serious evil—an evil to some extent it must always be.

In general, the work of the public schools for the year has been of a very satisfactory character; in many of the larger schools, and not a few of the smaller, it has been good; while in some it has been excellent. Change in the staff is the most common and the most serious occasion of decreasing efficiency, as more or less friction and waste of effort are almost inseparable from it. I believe it would be a great aid to efficiency if the Board more generally exercised its power of appointing teachers to vacant positions by way of transfer, and the transfers were deliberately arranged so as to involve as few changes as possible, consistently with a just consideration of teachers' merits and claims to advancement.