

modification of former regulation, feeling convinced that the advantages arising from the pupils being the owners of these books are many and great. For the present year it is proposed to confine the purchase of miscellaneous reading-books to pupils in the two upper classes. Next year it is our intention to recommend that all pupils shall be required to provide themselves with such miscellaneous reading-books as are necessary for their instruction.

SCHEMES OF WORK.—We regret having again to direct attention to the need for drawing up full and suitable schemes of work early in the year. In many of our schools—notably in those of higher grade—this matter receives most gratifying consideration, with the result that exhaustive, wisely selected, carefully graded, and well co-ordinated courses are available for reference and discussion during our visits. There are, however, quite an appreciable number of cases where, owing either to a feeling of diffidence or to a spirit of procrastination, or in consequence of disinclination to put forth the mental and physical effort the work demands, schemes of instruction are conspicuous by their absence, or so meagre in scope and so unambitious in aim as to be of but little use to any one. It is highly desirable that teachers should know exactly the kind and amount of work it is proposed to undertake in each subject during each period into which the year has been divided, and at the same time have a just appreciation of the manner in which the correlation of subjects is best secured. It is highly desirable also that an Inspector when visiting a school should be in a position to judge of the value and educative prospects of the teacher's contemplated programme. In view of these considerations, quite apart from the demands of clause 5 (a) of the Regulations for the Inspection and Examination of Schools, it is most necessary that due attention be bestowed on the preparation of schemes of work, and we would again bring under the notice of those to whom these remarks specially apply the paragraph dealing with schemes of work in our annual report of last year.

EXAMINATION OF STANDARD VI PUPILS.—In general very gratifying results were obtained at this examination, especially in the large schools, where, indeed, there were but few failures, and where, moreover, in most cases the work was of a uniformly high order. The plan adopted during the previous year of examination by Inspectors at convenient centres was extended as far as circumstances allowed. This examination, which must of necessity be taken as close to the end of the year as possible, unfortunately comes at a time when other work and other examinations are claiming attention, so that there is a limit to possible extension in a large district like our own, where schools are widely scattered and conveniences for moving rapidly from place to place are not always available. This is to be regretted, for we realize how important it is in cases where there is doubt as to what, if any, certificates should be awarded, that opportunities should be afforded us of coming into personal contact with the candidates in question, and of consulting with teachers as to their ability, powers of application, and progress, and their general claims on the service for the certificate sought. Most of the failures were due to weakness in arithmetic or faulty composition, both of which subjects will be referred to subsequently. With respect to some of the subjects of instruction we beg to make the following remarks:—

READING.—It is gratifying to record that this subject continues to be one of the most satisfactory in the syllabus—indeed, it is quite the exception to find a school where pupils, especially those in the upper classes, are unable to deal more or less correctly with unseen passages. In some schools the reading effort is particularly good, and though we should like to find a larger percentage of children throughout the schools who are able, by voice and general expression, to show a better appreciation of the passage read, we frankly admit that much has already been accomplished, especially in the case of large classes. The “reading habit” to which we referred last year continues to spread, and in many schools is being wisely fostered by the growth of class libraries. The additional reading-matter supplied this year through the medium of free class-books should have a further effect in the same direction. Notwithstanding constant reference in annual and other reports to what is commonly known as “comprehension,” this phase of reading still leaves much to be desired. We quite recognize the difficulty which children cannot fail to experience in finding fitting expression for the thought-content of the passage; still, they must be trained to discover this if ability to read is to result in the enrichment of mind and acquisition of knowledge. Too much attention is frequently paid to requiring pupils to paraphrase word by word the sentence dealt with, whereas what is really required is that they should express in their own language its general meaning—a relative simple matter when compared with the difficulties besetting the path of all who attempt the word-by-word process. We are not at all certain that too much time is not being devoted to written comprehension. There can be little doubt as to the value of requiring pupils (especially those in the upper standards) to express in full and accurate written language the meaning of what they read; but the process demands a good deal of time, and is not always satisfactory. We consider that most of the comprehension should be dealt with orally, and that written work in this connection should be confined to pupils in the higher classes, and even then should not be permitted to encroach unduly on time devoted to English subjects. Oral drill in this, as in other subjects, enables a good deal of ground to be covered in a short time; it also affords opportunities for training in ability to overcome difficulties, and is frequently the means of drawing attention to the writer's characteristics of style, choice of words, wealth of illustration, beauty of diction, as well as to other matters on which emphasis should be laid.

WRITING.—In most of the large schools this subject continues to be well taught throughout, and in many cases highly creditable progress has been achieved. In the smaller schools the gratifying appearance made by the lower classes, however, is not always maintained when pupils reach the upper standards. There is frequently a very noticeable difference between the quality of the sample presented as a “writing test” and that sent up in composition and other exercises, pupils being apparently unable to combine moderate speed with reasonably neat, legible penmanship. This is specially the case in Standard VI, and shows itself more particularly in the exercises