

a practice is adopted in many of our schools, the teachers of which wisely recognize that, by reason of the different rates of progress of the pupils, owing to disparity in ages, degree of maturity, temperament, and health, frequent readjustment is necessary. A more general application of such practice, however, is recommended, to include also cases of outstanding merit in the standard classes. Its operations should prove a determining factor in reducing the average age at which pupils pass the First Standard, and, consequently, at which they can afterwards qualify for admission to a secondary school.

CENTRAL EXAMINATION.—These were conducted on the same lines and mostly at the same centres as in the previous year. Experience has shown that such examinations are held under most favourable conditions as regards space, freedom from distraction, and the general comfort of those examined. Moreover, there is no doubt that those teachers who attend such centres profit considerably from the experience thereby acquired, and from the opportunity afforded for comparison of work and of methods of teaching. In the more remote schools candidates for certificates were examined on the occasion of the Inspector's announced visit, which in such cases were purposely paid late in the school year.

METHODS OF TEACHING.—Provided that the education of a child is based on sound principles, the success of the teacher to a large extent depends on the adoption of suitable methods. With this proviso your Inspectors have intentionally allowed a wide latitude to teachers in their selection of the methods adopted. A cast-iron uniformity is the last thing we would desire, and every encouragement is given to original thought in dealing with the problems of the class-room. For method after all is greatly a matter of the individual, just as the skilled artisan can work best with his own tools. The improved outlook is well described in the following passage from a recent article by a prominent educational authority: "The sun is well set on the days when teachers regarded method, nay, were even taught to regard it, as a kitful of rules sufficient to ensure their educational salvation, and we can at least flatter ourselves that they enter the teaching arena knowing that method is nothing more than the mind which they can throw into their work, and that in times of doubt and difficulty their cry must be, not 'Back to the books,' but 'back to the child.' . . . Good methods are, one and all, founded on a few principles as old as the hills. And how can we find these principles? Only by knowing the child. Knowing him in mind, and soul, and body, and by making an honest endeavour to get at the laws which govern the healthy development of his powers."

In this connection a powerful stimulus has been exerted by the wider attention given to books on the principles and history of education, resulting from the inclusion of that subject among those compulsory for the Class C certificate. This wise provision not only encourages a more extended outlook on the part of pupil-teachers and students in training, but has also exerted a beneficial influence on many teachers of mature age and experience, who have shown a healthy interest in up-to-date works on education, and have given renewed attention to the subject of child-study.

Of the quality of the instruction given in the several subjects of the syllabus the following brief estimate is submitted:—

READING.—With the wider scope and more liberal treatment now accorded to this subject, as illustrated by the wise use made of the *School Journal*, and of Supplementary Readers, a more intelligent comprehension of the matter read is associated with expansion of ideas and improved expression. In endeavouring to produce these desirable features of reading, the importance of clear and distinct enunciation must again be emphasized.

SPELLING.—This is, on the whole, a strong subject in our schools. Occasionally, indeed, we note a tendency to give more time to the testing, as distinguished from the teaching of spelling, than is warranted by its relative importance. Mechanical formalism in the testing of isolated words is giving place to more rational methods, which deal with the words in their natural environment. Towards this end, too, the improved treatment of English generally is rendering material assistance.

WRITING.—The attainment in writing is, on the whole, satisfactory, and in a goodly number of our schools very creditable, where neatly written and orderly arranged exercise-books and examination-papers are pleasing features of the school routine. In cases where the writing of a school has called for adverse criticism it has generally been associated with a go-as-you-please attitude with regard to such important matters as the holding of the pen, posture at the desk, and fidelity to the set copy, details that may fairly be regarded as indications of defective discipline.

COMPOSITION.—In the employment of written exercises on set topics, and in letter-writing, composition continues to receive liberal and successful treatment, more especially in the higher classes. The recent introduction of improved and attractive class-books should prove a valuable aid in teaching the more formal features of this subject. The perusal of answers of candidates for proficiency certificates shows that there is room for improvement in this direction. The questions on the English cards annually issued by the Education Department are of the same type as those used for several years, and consequently no surprise is sprung on the teachers; but satisfactory answers to these questions have not been as general as we could desire. In the junior and preparatory classes much good work is being done. Some teachers, however, still fail to realize the importance of availing themselves of every opportunity to enlarge the vocabulary of their young pupils, and to train them to express themselves clearly and accurately about what they read and observe. The more limited the vocabulary of the home the greater is the need for supplying this deficiency.

RECITATION.—To prove of really educative value, this subject requires to be skilfully taught. As far as memorizing poetry is concerned the treatment has been generally satisfactory. Young children have a natural love for rhythmic utterance, and this fact should not be overlooked in selecting passages for repetition. But because the poems are meant for children they need not