

*Reading* was generally very satisfactory. In the higher standards the comprehension of the lesson and knowledge of meanings were not strong; and in some preparatory classes the children, through being kept too long at the same book, repeated rather than read the lessons. The misplacing of the aspirate and the dropping of the final "g" were hardly ever met with; but there seems to be need for more systematic drill in giving consonants their due value. In two or three schools it would appear that this drill is regularly carried out, with excellent results. Generally, phrasing is not begun early enough in the preparatory classes. The passages for recitation were in many cases wisely selected and effectively rendered; but too often the repetition was merely a perfunctory treatment of pieces of poetry from the reading-books, good enough in their way for reading-practice, but not always worth the trouble of committing to memory. In the highest classes the recitation of selections of prose does not receive sufficient attention.

In *composition* very good work was done in the junior classes throughout the district, the younger children being well up to standard requirements in oral work whatever the nature of the test. In the middle classes very satisfactory general progress was shown, though the sentence-making in connected composition often failed to show any practical gain from formal exercises, such as analysis and synthesis, and correction of common errors. The pupils of the upper classes were able to supply much information on almost any kind of subject about which they were asked to write, but in their haste to display their knowledge of the matter they too often forgot the more important side—the method of communicating their ideas. The language used was in the simple style of their younger days, but often marred by carelessness in arrangement, punctuation, and spelling. It would appear that the demands made in the tests of late years are somewhat beyond the ability of the average child of thirteen or fourteen to satisfy, and that teachers, in their endeavour to prepare their pupils to cope with the difficulties of the common set questions, are compelled to shorten the time necessary for the acquirement of a free and correct style in essay and letter writing.

*Writing* is a subject that needs more actual teaching than it seems to receive. Each style of writing has certain characteristics that persist, however the hand may be modified by individuality; and where these are entirely lacking there is evidence that the instruction is unsatisfactory, and the supervision weak. In a large number of schools the pupils have filled in only a portion of one copy-book in the course of the year, though this has been supplemented by a certain amount of transcription in exercise-books. I have not been able to observe the methods of instruction in this subject; but from what I have seen of the results I should advise more copy-book work, less transcription from script on the blackboard, and closer supervision of all writing-exercises. The copy-book has at least one merit—the headlines are accurately executed; and where a teacher's set of questions written up on the blackboard is utterly devoid of stops of any kind, and has not an "i" dotted or a "t" crossed, one cannot be surprised if the pupils are habitually careless. Smudged and blotted written work of whatever nature is one of the indications of poor discipline; neat and clean copy-books were the exception rather than the rule.

On the whole, *spelling* was very good. At the annual visit no test was given in word-building, but this will form an important part of the work at the next examination. It is necessary to give a word of caution as to the proper formation of letters. At certain public examinations at which a test in spelling is given, candidates receive this warning: "No marks will be given for a word that contains a doubtful letter. The letter 'e' must be looped, the letter 'i' dotted, and the letter 't' crossed."

The *arithmetic* of the higher standards was somewhat disappointing, the principal points of weakness being careless slips in simple calculations, and lack of system in setting out. Where much work is packed into a small space it is difficult to avoid errors, and still more difficult to detect them in revising; and the absence of wording in an ordinary solution indicates that one of the principal objects of the teaching of arithmetic—the development of the reasoning-powers—is being lost sight of. The use of the term "answer," which is often meaningless, and in well-arranged work always unnecessary, might with advantage be dispensed with.

In only a very few schools is *drawing* carried out strictly in accordance with the regulations. Instrumental or geometrical drawing of some kind is required in every standard, or in every standard but the sixth, where model-drawing is taken in that class. Practice in design affords excellent training in observation, besides giving some idea of a connexion between everyday school-work and the arts and crafts. Drawing from copies has a certain value, but it should be entirely subsidiary to the drawing from objects, an abundant and varied supply of which usually lies ready to hand in the schoolroom, the home, and the field. The colouring of such drawings adds interest to the work, and, what is more important, gives a definite idea of mass, and relegates the line-work to its proper place. I find that there has been a lack of instruction in the methods of securing balance and proportion, in many cases the drawing of a simple symmetrical object being executed in one continuous stroke, and with no preparatory steps in the way of mapping out. It should be pointed out that object-drawing does not necessarily mean model-drawing. The kinds of objects that should be used are referred to in the syllabus; and model-drawing should not be attempted unless the seats and models can be arranged so as to give easy views of the latter.

*Singing* deserves much more definite treatment than it appears to be receiving. The learning of one or two songs in a year does not by any means fulfil the requirements of the syllabus, and when those songs are doleful and oft-repeated singing must become a weariness to the flesh. The songs selected for general work should be fairly numerous, generally bright and cheerful, as far as possible suited to the mental and physical development of the child, and always worth remembering. As songs become well known they could with advantage be taken at irregular intervals as convenient opportunities present themselves, especially at those peculiar times when the feeling of tension, which all teachers know so well, indicates a possible disturbance of the even tenor of the way. Inexperienced teachers should be particularly careful to remember that not quantity but quality is what they should strive for in the singing-lesson, and that this cannot be secured if the pupils are allowed to shout; the voices must be subdued, and the children taught to listen as they sing.