

Medical inspection is still in the capable hands of Dr. Eleanor S. Baker, who continues to discharge her duties with zeal and enthusiasm. The nursing staff, too, are rendering highly efficient and increasingly valuable service. The physical instructors have had a very busy year. Tactful in dealing with teachers, and energetic in carrying out their duties, they have won loyal support in a majority of schools, where, indeed, wide and varied programmes of physical instruction and organized games form a pleasing part of each day's work. In some few cases we note a tendency to limit the scope of the training, but taking the district as a whole we can confidently affirm that an advance has been made, the number of teachers who hold aloof from the sports and games of their pupils being a steadily diminishing one.

With regard to the main subjects of the syllabus there is little to report. The tension and nervous strain due to the war have undoubtedly had their effect upon both pupils and teachers, but it is gratifying to find that in spite of distracting influences the quality of the work has not suffered materially. There are still some schools, however, in which the methods adopted fail to secure either accuracy of knowledge or a reasonable standing of attainment. This is usually because the teachers attempt to do too much for their pupils, who, as a result, show lack of concentration, want of self-reliance, and distaste for prolonged effort. Depending too much on the instructor, the child fails to gain consciousness of power, without which true educational progress is impossible. The results of indifferent teaching show themselves most in the subjects belonging to the English group—inability on the part of the child to write or talk naturally or easily about what it has read or absorbed. As Ruskin has said, "No discipline is of more use to a child's character, with threefold bearing on intellect, memory, and morals, than the being accustomed to relate accurately what it has done and seen."

Although the majority of the teachers show skill in drawing up schemes of work, there are still some who fail to realize their responsibilities in this connection. If teachers complied with the regulations the Inspector could discuss with them the programmes outlined and show where improvements could be made. This is especially important in remote schools, where a fair number of teachers have but a hazy notion of how to plan out a satisfactory year's work in history or geography. In the better type of schools reading, composition, arithmetic, and drawing are strong subjects showing skilful treatment, but in less efficient schools these are the weakest of the curriculum. In composition especially the pupil's power of expression as he advances through the standards is not steadily progressive, while in arithmetic inaccuracy is the stumbling-block, for where there is a slipshod treatment of tables, counting, and mental work in the lower classes there must be more or less failure in the upper divisions. Drawing in the weaker schools is not handled effectively, and accordingly it is not becoming to the extent it should a means of clear expression of mental conceptions. Really poor reading is not often heard, but in some localities a tame, expressionless style prevails. In not a few schools the pieces chosen for recitation are often selected haphazard and with little regard for their literary value. In others, however, the recitation period is full of pleasure, and the pupils are trained to appreciate beauty of literary form and to render thought with fine elocutionary effect. Spelling is generally well done, although the time devoted to it might in some cases be reduced. Writing shows improvement where a strong effort is being made to develop a bold, legible, and fluent style. History, on the whole, notwithstanding its great importance, still remains a disappointing subject. The causes of failure in teaching this subject appear to be—(a) The disconnectedness of the schemes, there being no central idea kept prominently before the pupils, and little attempt to deal with great events or great natural movements as a whole; (b) the narrow reading and limited scope of the teacher's own knowledge; (c) the neglect to train pupils to express orally in clear form the subject-matter of the lessons given; (d) failure to make use of illustrative material for moral teaching; (e) neglect to use history-charts. Nature-study is often treated by unscientific methods, leading nowhere and accomplishing nothing. The best results are obtained in those schools where garden-plots are cultivated or full use is made of nature's lavish gifts of insect-life, of tree and shrub, of leaf and flower. While geography is efficiently taught in many schools, there is still a percentage of teachers who fail to make their lessons of real living interest. In the various branches of handwork the teachers show increased interest. In spite of difficulties of conveyance, large numbers have availed themselves of the opportunity to attend woodwork and cookery classes. New centres are being established, and these should afford opportunities for further extension of activities. In spite of the inconvenience caused by the war, our schools are fairly well equipped with material. The work done, so far as we are able to judge, is generally satisfactory, and it is pleasing to note in connection with the cookery programme that an improvement has been effected in that part of the course which comes under the head of "Principles of Domestic Science."

The interest in agricultural education continues to increase, and during the year the Board has endeavoured to establish classes in connection with the West Coast schools. Although in Westland climatic conditions have damped the ardour of some of the teachers, there are from six to twelve schools in which the work shows definite progress. A very fair number of schools in Canterbury show most creditable gardens and give theoretical instruction equally good in quality. The interest taken by many teachers has had its effect upon the parents, and there is now a tendency in many school districts to render assistance in improving and beautifying the school-grounds, which, indeed, bid fair to become in time the beauty-spot of the neighbourhood.

The important subject of sewing has received faithful attention, and generally good work has been done throughout. During the war period considerable latitude has been allowed with regard to the syllabus. In the majority of schools articles suitable for Red Cross purposes have been produced, and in addition to the practical value of the work the pupils have received admirable training in true patriotism and social service.

Almost without exception good order and discipline prevail in our schools, and the pupils are receiving excellent training in manners and behaviour. We have every reason for believing