

During the closing weeks of the year four organizing teachers were appointed to assist in improving the small schools manned by inexperienced teachers. Each organizer was allotted twelve schools, and in these, short though the time was, a marked improvement was effected. We were very pleased with the whole-hearted zeal with which the organizers entered into their work. A plan of operations was drafted for each organizer, and advice was given him as to the best method of helping the teachers in his charge.

Conferences with teachers were held by the Inspectors at eight centres early in February. At the larger centres the teachers divided into three committees, comprising respectively those interested in country schools, in infant schools, and in the work of assistants. The discussions proved instructive to the Inspectors as well as to the teachers, but we found we had attempted to cover too wide a field. Meetings of the kind would, we think, be of more profit if fewer topics were selected and due notice were given teachers of the subjects to be discussed.

With regard to the training of the pupil-teachers and probationers throughout the district, we have again to express our satisfaction with the fine work done by the majority of these young people in the Saturday instruction classes. We gave as much attention as time permitted to an examination of the methods by which the apprentice teachers received their professional training. In very few cases had we to report neglect by either head teachers or trainees, the Board's regulations in this respect being faithfully complied with.

During the midwinter recess a winter school of instruction in science and drawing was held, with the object mainly of qualifying uncertificated teachers in remote schools to receive a "practical certificate" in science. These certificates are not awarded until the student has attended courses of lessons spread over two years. In the first year instruction in general science is given, and not until the second year is reached is any student in the district allowed to specialize. As a rule elementary agriculture is the science finally taken, and throughout the district there is an understanding that agriculture is to be the science taught, unless the school, is so badly situated that practical outdoor work is impossible.

With regard to the quality of the instruction in the primary schools we have little to add to the detailed remarks submitted in our last report. Speaking generally, we found drawing greatly improved, owing mainly to the untiring efforts of the Board's special instructor, in whose methods teachers take a marked and profitable interest. Composition is not as well taught as we would like, too much attention being given to the more formal branches. Oral composition is scarcely practised except in a few good schools where in the highest classes free debating gave us great pleasure. The art of letter- and essay-writing is regularly practised by the pupils, but rarely taught in a systematic manner. We propose to give in the *Leaflet* detailed hints on the teaching of both oral and written composition. Recitation is as much neglected and as badly taught as we found it last year. Spelling is not the fetish it used to be, and gradually more enlightened methods of teaching the subject are making their way in the schools. Mental arithmetic is still kept out in the cold, for the formal text-book occupies most of the pupils' time. In few country schools are geography and history really taught, and it is a common experience to find the text-book usurping the place of the oral lesson. In the larger schools, however, these subjects are, in our opinion, faithfully taught, and oral lessons are the rule. It has been suggested, and no doubt with good reason, that where the text-book is so slavishly followed to the exclusion of the oral lesson the teacher herself lacks a knowledge of what she is expected to teach.

The S6 proficiency examinations were held during November and December, the final results being in the hands of teachers before the schools closed. In but few cases were any schools examined for proficiency earlier than the third week in November, and none were examined during October. The following in brief was our procedure: The schools were divided into three groups, Group A comprising schools in the case of which the Inspector conducted the examination at convenient centres, Groups B and C where a synchronous examination was held under the supervision of the head teacher, assisted in the case of Group B by his staff; and in the case of Group C, comprising the very remote schools by an honorary assistant supervisor appointed by the School Committee. An examination in history, geography, and drawing, papers for which were sent out from the Education Office, was held under the teachers' supervision in all schools on the 18th November. At the request of a large number of teachers suggestive tests in English and arithmetic were sent out by the office staff at the beginning of October and the beginning of November; but the use of these was entirely optional. As a result of these or of similar tests teachers were in a position to furnish detailed estimates of each pupil's proficiency in the subjects of instruction. In addition, we received marks from the instructors in wood-work and cookery. We endeavoured to make it clear to head teachers that their estimates were not to be based entirely on the results of any formal examinations, but were to be modified in the light of their experience of the pupil's work throughout the year. Notwithstanding our endeavours, however, we regretted to find that most head teachers did base their estimates on the last class examination he'd. In making the proficiency awards in schools above Grade IIIA we departed somewhat from our usual practice of examining all candidates, and awarded certificates to the best pupils on the estimates furnished by the head teachers. In very few cases were pupils passed who received less than 400 marks, which allowed a margin of 40 marks over the aggregate required for a proficiency pass. The remaining pupils were all examined at centres by an Inspector. The following are the tabulated results of the proficiency and competency examinations in the case of the public schools:—

Number of candidates on the roll	..	..	..	..	..	1,076
Number who gained proficiency	..	..	..	..	..	705
Number who gained endorsed competency	..	..	..	..	..	17
Number who gained competency	..	..	..	..	..	189
Percentage of proficiency passes	..	..	..	..	..	65.4

Physical instruction and organized games are, on the whole, well attended to. In most of the larger schools the morning recess is well organized and the whole staff participates in the physical training. Swimming is taught in many schools, and most of the larger ones have their own baths. In one or two cases, however, we are quite aware that, though capitation is paid, there is very little actual teaching of swimming. In these cases the withdrawal of capitation would no doubt prove a