

## CURRICULUM AND STANDARDS

During the last two years a considerable amount of thought and attention has been given to the curriculum for the short-course pupils. We have realized that a large number of pupils have come on to post-primary schools who in earlier years completed their schooling at the primary stage. We have therefore been faced with a situation different from that which has been the particular problem of secondary schools in the past. Many of these additional pupils stay for a short time, though there is a growing tendency for them to stay at least for two years, as this is now regarded as a minimum standard of education for those entering many trades. It seems clear that these short-course pupils cannot be satisfied with just the elementary parts of the curriculum that has been specially designed for pupils who are staying at school to pass School Certificate or University Entrance. Much time has therefore been spent in discovering a new approach to the subjects which are common to everyone. The introduction of the "common core" has been a great help in this regard, for the basic education of short-course pupils is a development of the "common core" with emphasis on English and elementary mathematics, together with some practical subjects in which the pupils are particularly interested. In rural centres a very large percentage of the short-course pupils return to their homes in the country and secure employment on farms or in their homes. Particular attention has therefore been given to the development of a suitable curriculum for them. The introduction of horticulture as a School Certificate option has proved helpful, for it can be included as a development of the "common core" and is very relevant to the future occupation of both boys and girls. The various aspects of homecraft have also been developed for girls, and attention is being paid to a sound course of practical work for boys based on gardening and rural crafts. While we have short-course pupils—that is, while pupils leave school when they reach the school-leaving age or as soon thereafter as possible—we cannot hope to do much more than round off their general education and give them some inkling of the fields of study that lie beyond.

It is not a very easy matter to assess the standard of work from year to year in a wide variety of schools and subjects. Of one thing, however, the Inspectors are positive—the standard of work in the Sixth Form has never been higher and the attitude of pupils who reach the Sixth Form is, in general, very good indeed. In some subjects, particularly those with a mathematical basis, the standard of work in the Sixth Form is very high, and may even be regarded as unnecessarily high if mathematics is to be kept at about the same level as other subjects. Students who have taken mathematics to scholarship level are exempt in at least one college from lectures at Stage I, and it is proposed that they should be permitted to proceed direct to Stage II. In this regard, therefore, mathematics in the post-primary school has advanced beyond the requirements of the University; but this is not the case in other subjects.

In general, I am satisfied that the standards of work have been well maintained. There are many teachers who are doing excellent experimental work in such subjects as social studies and elementary mathematics, and have proved that these subjects can be exacting disciplines and of cultural significance. In English there has been a very considerable development of library work, and I think it is not unreasonable to say that children have to-day a much wider knowledge of English literature than their elders had at their age in the past. The introduction of music has been attended in many cases with splendid results. The development of broadcasting has, of course, had a tremendous effect on musical taste, and the schools have not been slow to make use of those improved standards to develop music amongst their own pupils.