

be paid off gradually from the allowance made for cleaning; and even if that were not possible any additional expenditure would be justified, for, in addition to providing for the better supervision of the buildings, the Committees would be in a position to make better provision for cleaning than they are able to do in many cases at the present time.

In the matter of painting, repairs, and improved latrine accommodation, gradual improvement is being made, but as the details are furnished in another report we do not propose dwelling upon them here. Through no fault of the Committees or the teachers the offices in many schools are not kept in a sanitary condition. This is a very difficult matter to deal with, but very important for the health of the children, and we are pleased to see that the Board has been collecting information with a view to considering the whole question. We hope the result will be a considerable improvement in the sanitary arrangements of our country schools.

In the return regarding the general efficiency of the 152 schools visited, 117 are reported as satisfactory to good. Of the remainder, nineteen are classified as fair, and sixteen as inferior. Of these thirty-five it is only fair to point out that the great majority are in the lowest grades, where the salaries offer so little inducement to trained teachers that we have the greatest difficulty in finding even uncertificated teachers for the positions. The frequent changes which take place in the smaller country schools also militate very much against general efficiency.

In reviewing the condition of the more important subjects of the syllabus, we find that in reading improvement has taken place in a great deal of the faulty pronunciation formerly so prevalent. Lack of expression and slovenly enunciation and articulation are however still too commonly brought under our notice. While neglect in the preparatory classes of phonics and of systematic exercises in syllabification are no doubt contributing causes, the above faults are mainly the result of the abuse of simultaneous reading, a practice really forced upon teachers by the large and unwieldy classes which they are called upon to manage. The detection of the evils and their causes is an easy enough matter, but, in default of a reasonable system of staffing, the suggestion of a remedy is not so easy. How is a teacher, without an undue amount of simultaneous reading, to get a class of sixty or seventy children through two or three reading-books in the year? The Lancastrian system claims to have solved the problem by splitting up the class into sections of, say, ten pupils, each section being placed under a monitor, and the teacher exercising general control and supervision. But such a system bristles with practical difficulties and is of doubtful efficacy. A better plan would be to place the more satisfactory readers of a class in a division by themselves for practice in silent reading. This arrangement would enable the teacher to give more of the individual attention necessary for the weaker readers, who, as they improved from time to time, would be promoted to the upper division. The ordinary school editions of English authors would provide excellent matter for the silent readers, who, while receiving occasional individual attention from the teacher, would have their work tested mainly by questions on the subject-matter of the books they have been reading. The plan is by no means an ideal one, but in addition to the advantage of enabling the teacher to concentrate his efforts it would relieve the brighter pupils of the class from the boredom of listening to reiterated expositions of reading-lessons which they almost know by heart, and in which they consequently take little interest. Moreover, with a judicious selection of authors, the practice of silent reading might be made a powerful means of inculcating in the pupils some love and appreciation of good literature for its own sake. As a matter of fact we find that reading reaches the higher level only in those schools where the pupils are supplied generously with extra reading-matter, and are encouraged to make good use of the school library.

Spelling ranges from "satisfactory" to "good." Correct spelling depends on intelligent and thoughtful reading with careful enunciation; and, as we have said before, by strict attention to these important points spelling might practically disappear from the syllabus as a separate subject.

The composition tests usually consist of letters, short essays on familiar subjects, reproduction of stories or other matter, exercises in sentence-structure, and the correction of common errors in written and spoken language. Bearing in mind the limited vocabulary and the scanty stock of ideas with which the average child is provided, we are fairly satisfied with the results obtained, at least so far as the smaller schools of the district are concerned. In our large schools, more especially in the district high schools, we think the subject might well be treated on broader lines. In addition to aiming at grammatical correctness and accuracy of expression, there should be some attempt at cultivation of style. In composition-lessons children are too often asked to express their attenuated ideas in their own scanty vocabulary; not sufficient value is attached to the study and appreciation of the language of the masters of English prose. The average school letters submitted to us are apt to be too exclusively concerned with matters and details of a domestic nature. For the future in the upper standards we shall expect them to be of a more general character; and in deference to the requirements of the business portion of the community they should include letters of advice to business firms on simple transactions, applications for advertised positions, explanations of the writer's absence from his duties, and similar topics. In our last report we pointed out that though formal grammar as such had disappeared from the syllabus, teachers were not to suppose that nothing had taken its place. It is now more than ever necessary that the scheme of work-book should give full details with regard to the method of treating such an all-important subject as composition. Though the teaching of the technical complexities of grammar as a necessary part of composition is still discouraged by the regulations, the proposed rearrangement of the subject-matter of the syllabus will indicate more clearly the requirements in grammar as a branch of composition.

In our last report we drew attention to the many and diverse systems of handwriting taught in this district, and the consequent disadvantages under which both teachers and pupils laboured when the latter moved from school to school. As a means of remedying this the Board has decided that one style of copy-book (Vere Foster's Medium Series) should be used in all schools in the district, and we are looking forward to beneficial results from a course which has already been adopted with success.