

at which pupils pass out of the schools would be appreciably increased were it not for the fact that a large proportion leave before reaching the higher standards. There seems good ground for believing that, in some schools at least, pupils are kept in the preparatory classes until they have overtaken much of the work of Standard I. It is true that some of these are promoted into Standard II, but this is quite exceptional. In most cases the pupils concerned are required to remain in Standard I for the normal year, if not merely marking time, at least making but little real progress in work in advance of what they have already overtaken. We are further of opinion that an average of two years should prove, in the absence of special circumstances, a sufficient time in which to prepare a child for promotion to Standard I.

EXAMINATION OF STANDARD VI PUPILS.—For the purpose of awarding Standard VI certificates a synchronous examination was held, as in former years, in convenient centres early in December. This was supervised by the head teachers of the schools concerned, who, at the close of the examination, forwarded to the Chief Inspector the papers worked by candidates. At each of the other centres an Inspector was present, and was able to supply results either at the close of or a few days after the examination. We should like to see an extension of this plan, and hope during the year to arrange for a larger number of centres being visited by Inspectors, as we feel sure that consultation with teacher and personal contact with pupil are of the greatest importance in enabling a just estimate to be formed of the merits and attainments of the latter. Much of the work, we may add, was highly commendable, and, though in some cases weakness of a more or less grave character appeared, the general level reached was creditable, and went to show that the teaching as indicated by the finished product of the school is for the most part intelligent and thorough, and that pupils are applying themselves with industry and success. And here we should like to give a word of warning to some who are apt to attach undue importance to the winning of Standard VI certificates, holding that thereby the efficiency of the school is gauged and the ability of the teacher estimated. Though we recognize the need for trained intelligence and accurate knowledge on the part of those who prepare pupils for these examinations, and though we think highly of the school whose upper class is able to give a good account of itself in the tests applied, we submit that other parts of the school have equal claims on the attention of the teacher, and that these must in no way be subordinated to preparing pupils for a leaving certificate. The efficiency of a school is estimated by the standard of work it is able to maintain throughout all classes, and no amount of proficiency in Standard VI can or will atone for backward conditions obtaining elsewhere.

PROMOTION OF PUPILS.—Closely connected with the question to which we have just referred is that of the promotion and classification of pupils throughout the school, and, though the matter has been dealt with before in annual reports from this and other districts, its importance is such as to warrant our again reverting to it. We are fully aware that in the great majority of our schools a wise and wholesome restraint is exercised when promoting pupils, and that only those who are able profitably to undertake advanced work are moved into higher classes. There are, however, still a number of schools where promotions are unduly rapid, and where, whether from outside pressure or want of experience, very serious and possibly lasting injury is done to the pupils concerned. It is not too much to say that to promote the average pupil to a higher class before the work of the lower class has been properly assimilated and mastered is to inflict on an innocent subject a cruel wrong, and seriously to jeopardize his or her chances of obtaining the maximum benefit from school training. Further, on the class into which the backward pupil is promoted the effect is most discouraging, in consequence of the teacher's efforts being largely occupied in the profitless task of endeavouring to give assistance where it can do but little good. We trust that those to whom these words apply will realize in future the importance of refusing promotion to all who have not worthily earned it.

SCHEMES OF WORK.—These are not always forthcoming in the form we would like to see in use. Some teachers seem to forget that clause 5 (a) of the Regulations for the Inspection and Examination of Schools requires a scheme to be prepared for each class, in which should appear the amount of work covered in each subject during the progress of each period, so that the whole may present the sum total of what it is proposed to overtake during the year. In quite a number of schools we found that such schemes were not prepared in the case of the preparatory classes, and that in others they lacked definition and point, and showed but little interdependence. In making out schemes of work each subject should be taken by itself, and its development carried forward, so that the work in any one class follows on from what has already been covered in the next lower class, and leads up to what awaits pupils in the next higher class. When this has been done the next step is to correlate work where possible, interweaving the various subjects in such a way that each may be an aid to the others, and that the whole may bear evidence of some definite and approved plan. Where classes are grouped for instruction it is essential in most cases that any special course should be divided into as many yearly programmes as there are classes in the group. If this be not done it means that the same work is undertaken by the same pupils in successive years, an arrangement that cannot be commended in the case of groups, the highest and lowest members of which are continually changing.

PERIODICAL EXAMINATIONS.—In the great majority of cases these are carefully conducted, and the results entered up in the registers provided with neatness and regularity. We must remind some of our teachers, however, that all written questions set for these examinations, and the pupils' answers thereto, must be kept in the school for reference for at least twelve months; this has not always been done: also, that it is quite useless setting questions for examination if the same are not carefully and systematically corrected. It might be well to bear in mind that all these matters are taken into consideration when determining grading marks, and when awarding efficiency marks for the information of the Department. We take this opportunity of expressing our regret that the demands of regulation do not permit us to sanction a reduction of the number