

of periodical examinations, especially in the case of the larger schools, where the amount of clerical and other work involved imposes a very real and serious burden, and cannot fail to absorb a large portion of the head teacher's time and energies. Two examinations—one held about the middle of the year and one towards the end—in our opinion, would be quite sufficient to satisfy the head teacher as to the progress and attainments of each class-unit, and to enable him to gauge with accuracy the general condition of the school.

**CLASS-LISTS AND ANNUAL RETURNS.**—We again find it necessary to draw attention to the irregularity with which these returns have been forwarded to the office, and the incompleteness with which many of them have been filled up. Making all due allowance for the number of inexperienced teachers in the service, from whom mistakes in filling up and forwarding returns do not come as a surprise, we consider that the percentage of annual class-lists which we were obliged to send back to teachers as not being "complete and duly in order" was much too great, and points to careless reading of regulation. There seems no adequate reason why these inaccuracies should occur, seeing that the instructions appearing on both the forms used are so clear and explicit, and we cherish the hope that in future, by making themselves better acquainted with the letter and terms of regulations, teachers will be in a position to forward their class-lists fully and correctly entered up, and so lessen the troublesome and unnecessary labour which the irregularities of the past three years have caused.

**MARKING AND KEEPING OF REGISTERS.**—In spite of the trenchant remarks made in last year's report on the marking and keeping of registers, we still find schools where the instructions appearing on the back of the Register of Daily Attendances are not complied with. The importance of entering up the attendances with regularity, and at the proper and appointed hour, it is unnecessary to dwell on, and the need for complying with printed instructions in this matter is too obvious to require further comment. We trust that this additional warning which is hereby given will have a salutary effect, and obviate the necessity of our having to adopt more heroic measures to secure the end in view.

**ENVIRONMENT.**—We are glad to be able to report that this matter is receiving greater and more interested attention each year. In most of the larger schools and in many of the smaller ones the interior of the rooms is being made more attractive by the presence of suitable and appropriate pictures and pot plants, whilst the surrounding playgrounds show evidence of constant attention in their neat and well-cared-for appearance. A few of the larger schools have made use of the small space at their disposal, and formed a garden, from which we have no doubt pupils derive much genuine pleasure and profit. The term "environment," however, implies considerably more than this, and, as we are frequently asked to define its scope, we append herewith a definition submitted and approved during the course of the year: "By environment is meant the degree of attention bestowed on the school grounds, school gardens, and exterior and interior of buildings, with special reference to the efforts made to present cheerful and attractive class-rooms, and to the interest shown in the care of furniture, maps, and charts, in arranging cupboards, in promoting the formation and growth of suitable libraries and museums, in collecting pictures and apparatus likely to assist in the illustration of lessons, and in preserving all circulars and documents bearing on school-work. It also has reference to the organization of suitable activities and occupations, through which school traditions are largely fostered."

With respect to some of the subjects of instruction we beg to offer the following remarks:—

**READING.**—It is pleasing to note that this subject still continues to show improvement, and in most schools is a strong feature, pupils in general being able to read with ease and fluency from text previously unseen. These happy and altogether commendable results have been brought about largely by the additional attention given to the subject, and by the increased use of supplementary reading-books. In this connection, more gratifying still is that the reading habit is being fostered and encouraged by the use of school and class libraries, the latter, we are glad to find, growing more and more in favour. An important factor in the achievement of these results has been and is the *School Journal*, whose monthly advent is so eagerly looked forward to by both pupil and teacher. Its wisely chosen selections from gems of English literature, its well-written articles on current topics, its readable accounts of modern discoveries and inventions, of interesting and important international questions, of scenes of travel and adventure, and its contributions to the history and geography courses—to mention only a few of the matters treated in its pages—render it a very welcome, a very real, and a very valuable addition to the available reading-matter in our schools. We are obliged to add that there are still some schools where the importance of a wide course of reading in the preparatory classes is not sufficiently recognized, and where the supplementary reading-books suitable to this stage have seen but little service during the year. We are now referring not to half-time schools, or to those whose peculiar circumstances render it difficult if not impossible to overtake the amount of reading-matter deemed necessary, but to schools where no reason can be found for the omission to make use of facilities well within their reach, and we write this paragraph with the object of drawing attention to what we view as an injustice to junior classes.

**RECITATION.**—We wish briefly to draw attention to this subject, which frequently disappoints and but seldom satisfies the demands of reasonable test. The choice of poetry is not always judicious, a fact to be deplored seeing that the few poems learnt in class but seldom receive additions after the close of school life. Some of the poetical passages which have done duty in this district for so many years are devoid of human interest and unsuitable to child-nature, and many of them have been learnt and repeated so frequently that long ago they must have lost their freshness. The selection of passages from the wealth of beautiful poetry so readily available in this age of cheap classical literature should commend itself to all who wish to add to the interest and educative value of the poetry lesson. We must confess to a feeling of disappointment, moreover, at the meagre appreciation frequently shown by pupils of beauty of thought and setting in the selections studied, to say nothing of halting delivery or inaccurate knowledge