

Recitation is on the whole marked by independent, clear, and distinct expression, and the pieces chosen are in general well understood. The selection of prose passages for recitation is becoming more general.

The writing of the lower and middle classes is distinctly good, but that of the upper classes is still too slowly done.

In formal grammar the work of S2 and S3 is very well done, but that of S4 does not, on the whole, show so much advance as might reasonably be expected. In S5 and S6 analysis and synthesis are good, and the correction of faulty sentences is satisfactory, but we are frequently disappointed with the inability of pupils to apply well-known rules of syntax to the particular instance under consideration.

Very satisfactory progress is being made in the treatment of composition, both oral and written, but we should like to find more stress laid upon the former branch.

Arithmetic is as a rule well taught, and commendable improvement in accuracy is noticeable, especially during the latter half of the year. As a rule the written work is well set out—a clear proof of the methodical teaching; but in this, as in writing, greater rapidity must be insisted on, especially in the larger schools, in which we fear there is still too much of what might be called “spoonfeeding” by the teacher, and too little independent work by the taught. In the preparatory classes the tables are first taught concretely, largely in association with handwork, and we find increasing attention being given to thorough memory-work; but in the higher classes sufficient attention is not being paid to mental calculations. If teachers insisted on mental calculations right through the arithmetic lesson greater accuracy and increased rapidity would inevitably follow.

In drawing, the schemes of work lack definiteness of aim and careful gradation, notwithstanding the well-graded list of objects suggested in the departmental syllabus. The course to be followed is largely determined by the exigencies and character of the school; but in every case much attention should be paid to drawing as a means of expression, not with the object of producing artists, but for the purpose of training in graphic representation. Too frequently the pupils rush precipitately at the work, without having first decided on the characteristic features necessary to effect the suggestion. The result is that time that should be spent in a study of essentials—e.g., relative positions and proportions—is wasted over inessential details, and the really educative value of the exercise is lost sight of.

The international struggle has invested the teaching of geography with special interest, and at the hands of many teachers the subject has been impressively treated on the historic, economic, and political sides. Mathematical and physical geography has received satisfactory treatment, and we note a marked improvement in practical observational work, but the geographical excursion is too seldom undertaken.

History is gradually recovering its place in the schools, but there are still too many teachers who appear satisfied to confine their teaching in this subject to the contents of prescribed text-books. In this respect adequate treatment and real live teaching can come only from teachers who are thoroughly familiar with the works of our chief historians, and who keep themselves well in touch with recent historical and sociological publications.

We note with great satisfaction that the singing-lesson is being more widely used to cultivate pure vowel-sounds, and that more attention is being paid to the correct positions of lips and tongue for producing the different sounds. A few enthusiastic teachers have, by skilful use of the singing-lesson, acquired quite extraordinary success in this connection.

Morals and Health.—Formerly these subjects were taken up incidentally, but recently we have insisted on teachers producing a record of the work done, especially in health and home science, and have to report that programmes presented show that reasonable attention is now being paid to these subjects. In connection with morals, however, we would remind a few of our teachers that example is more potent than precept, especially with regard to punctuality. We have had on several occasions to direct attention to the Board’s reasonable regulation requiring teachers to be at school a quarter of an hour before the assembly, so that preparation may be made to prevent delay in starting work. The disregard of this regulation reflects not only on the offender, but also on the directive ability of the head teacher.

For the greater part of the year the needlework of the schools was in the main directed towards assisting the Patriotic Society in furnishing outfits for the troops, in providing garments for the destitute Belgians, and in supplying articles for the hospital ships. We append for the information of the Department a copy of a report on this work which we laid before the Board in December [not printed], and also a copy of a letter from the president of the Ladies’ Patriotic Association [not printed] concerning the quality of the work sent in by the schools. Two outstanding features of the work were the revival of the art of knitting among both boys and girls, and the readiness with which the senior boys of several schools undertook to provide half-cost of sewing-machines to enable the girls to carry out the work expeditiously. Twenty-one machines were obtained in this way.

In conclusion we have to say that the work of the schools is conducted on educative lines, and is producing a good effect on the character of the pupils.

We have, &c.,

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