

During the recent influenza epidemic the services of the school Medical Inspectors, the school nurses and the physical instructors were placed at the disposal of the Department of Public Health, and on all sides high appreciation of their enthusiasm and efficiency was expressed.

During their visits to various centres the Medical Inspectors have delivered a large number of addresses and lectures to teachers, parents, and children concerning the various means by which disease may be prevented or checked, and by which the physique of the children might be improved. In addition to this, parents are invited to be present at the school while the medical inspection of their children is being carried on. This gives the doctor an opportunity of showing the parent directly anything requires attention, and of giving simple directions for the remedy of any defect pointed out. Numerous lectures have also been delivered to training college students on the methods, purpose, and importance of medical inspection, and on the part which the teacher may take in promoting the physical welfare of the children.

The Medical Inspectors have also been of great assistance to the Education Boards in supplying reports on the hygienic and sanitary condition of the schools, and in making suggestions which in their opinion would improve health conditions in the schools.

A large number of leaflets and circulars have been issued to parents giving guidance on matters such as the care of the teeth, suitable kinds of clothing, eyesight, treatment of skin troubles, and obstructed breathing.

The cost of medical inspection for the year 1918-19 was £6,206.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION.

The number of physical instructors has been increased during the year to fourteen, and the work of physical training in the schools is becoming more and more effective in promoting the physical welfare of the children. Unfortunately it has been impossible up to the present to place this work under expert guidance, but applications have been invited for the position of Superintendent of Medical Inspection and Physical Instruction, and with the appointment of this officer certain extensions and improvements in the system will no doubt be undertaken.

The cost of physical education for the year 1918-19 was £4,292.

MANUAL INSTRUCTION.

(See also Appendix C.)

The steady extension of instruction in some form of handwork, for the most part closely correlated with the ordinary subjects of the syllabus, leads to the conclusion that the meaning and value of the concrete method is now more fully appreciated by the teachers of the Dominion. The number of public schools making provision for this form of instruction in 1917 stood at 2,011; for the year under review capitation was paid in respect of 2,135 schools, an increase of 124; and, as facilities were provided for other branches of manual training in 1,532 schools, it may be said that few children of school age are now deprived of some form of hand-and-eye training. Development has, however, been retarded in certain directions by the abnormal rise in the cost of stationery and material for handwork, and the difficulty of obtaining supplies. Notwithstanding these difficulties, some sound constructive work in paper and cardboard modelling, &c., in the lower standards, and wherever possible in metal-work, woodwork, cookery, laundry-work, and dress-making, and various branches of elementary science, elementary agriculture, and dairy-work in the higher standards, has been the basis of training which not only links together education and life, but at the same time provides opportunities for a most valuable form of both mental and physical training. It has been well said, "handwork has for its fundamental principles mainly two complementary attributes—viz., (1) progressive activity for developmental functioning, and (2) the acquisition of skill in the use of tools, instruments, and material in order to foster adaptability and resource"; and it may be added that under wise guidance the training assists in the development of initiative and independence of judgment.