

### CURRICULUM OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.

Although the curriculum of secondary schools is not specifically defined by departmental regulations, the definition of subjects of instruction to be taught to free-place holders and the prescribed syllabuses of the various public examinations to a large extent control the character of the courses of work undertaken. Instruction must be provided for junior-free-place holders in English, history and civics, arithmetic, mathematics, a branch of science, and in two additional subjects which may be one or two foreign languages, science subjects, or some such subject as commercial work, woodwork, drawing, &c. The study of home science is compulsory for every girl holding a junior free place.

The Department's Inspectors of Secondary Schools visit all secondary schools inspecting the work, conferring with the teachers on teaching matters, and discussing with the Principals details of organization and method. Written and oral tests are also given to second-year pupils in English, arithmetic, and usually in other subjects up to the standard of the Intermediate Examination, and Principals' recommendations for the award of senior free places and of the various leaving certificates are dealt with. Besides an academic course, secondary schools now generally provide shorter complete courses for pupils not intending to go on to the University or to enter a profession, in addition to courses with a commercial, agricultural, or a domestic bias. 57 per cent. of the boys and 30 per cent. of the girls now take Latin, while over 80 per cent. of the pupils learn French. Commercial subjects were taken in 1922 by one thousand seven hundred boys and one thousand girls, agriculture by over five hundred boys, and dairy science by two hundred boys.

In the district high schools the courses are still more of a nature directly bearing upon the vocations shortly to be followed by the pupils, many of the schools providing a full rural course of instruction. The result is that such a subject as Latin is taken by only 25 per cent. of the pupils, while agricultural science is taken by 71 per cent. of the boys and 23 per cent. of the girls, woodwork and metalwork by 62 per cent. of the boys, and needlework and cookery by 64 per cent. of the girls. Some pupils in these schools prefer to take the ordinary academic course, with the result that the burden laid upon the teachers, who number only one or two in most of the schools, is very great. The Dalton plan is being practised successfully in a number of these schools, and Inspectors report that in spite of frequent changes in the staff and often insufficient and improvised accommodation the standard of work is gradually rising.

At present an investigation is being made by the Department into the whole question of the secondary-school curriculum.

The Department has recently issued a draft list of text-books approved for use in secondary schools, district high schools, and the general courses in technical high schools. In compiling the list the Department was influenced by the cost of the books, their suitability for various grades and types of pupils, the present very general use of certain books, and the various methods of teaching employed.

### LENGTH OF THE SCHOOL YEAR.

An investigation made into the number of holidays given in secondary and technical high schools during the year revealed considerable variation in the practice of the different schools. The longest school year was one of 392 half-days, and the shortest one of 351 half-days, or 35 school weeks. A working-year of this length is considered much too short, and the opinion is expressed that 390 half-days, or 38 full school weeks, is the minimum length of school year desirable in schools of this type. It is proposed to take steps in the direction of securing some measure of uniformity in this respect.

### DESTINATION OF PUPILS LEAVING THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

From returns received concerning pupils leaving the secondary schools at the end of 1922, it appears that 6 per cent. of the number went on to the University, 15 per cent. entered the teaching profession, and 10 per cent. entered other schools or classes for clerical training. Farming was taken up by 23 per cent. of the boys