

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT.

In practically every school a plan of the grounds has been prepared showing the improvements already effected and mapping out definite schemes for the future. By the adoption of this system continuity of work in the improvement of the environment is being achieved, and a definite objective is placed before the Committee and the teacher. This has resulted in great activity on such matters as levelling grounds, laying out gardens and lawns, and the planting of shrubs and trees. Full advantage is taken of the Arbor Day function. For a week beforehand special lessons are given on subjects connected with plant-life, tree-planting, forests in relation to climate and industry, and the like. Arbor Day itself is in most school districts a community function, and is celebrated as a most important occasion.

MANUAL AND TECHNICAL CLASSES.

Woodwork.—We have been well pleased with the work of the woodwork classes. Practical work has been carried out on rational lines, and the neatness both of the models and of the drawing is commendable. At the beginning of the year a general scheme was drawn up in co-operation by the instructors and the Senior Inspector. In this it was sought to co-ordinate the work in drawing of the instructors and that of the class-teachers. This scheme is to be carried out for two years, when it will be revised, if necessary. We should like to see more freedom of choice given to the boys in the choice of the models to be made.

Cookery.—We are satisfied that the girls are receiving useful practical instruction in cookery, but it appeared to us that the more scientific aspect of the instruction was being somewhat neglected. With a view to improvement in this respect a new course of work was prepared at the beginning of the year. Like the woodwork scheme, this is to be revised, if necessary, after two years. We are looking for a lead in this respect from the Department's recently appointed officer in charge of the work.

DESTINATION OF STANDARD VI AND OTHER PUPILS.

The following statistics refer to pupils who left school at the end of 1923 or during 1924. They have been compiled from material supplied by the head and sole teachers. Compared with the total number of pupils in Standard VI of 1923, they show that of those pupils who gained proficiency or endorsed competency, or who were recommended for secondary work on their competency certificates by the Senior Inspector, 66 per cent. took up some form of secondary education.

- (1.) Number of 1923 Standard VI pupils who undertook some form of secondary education during 1924: College or secondary school, 270; district high school, 136; technical school or college, 299; Standard VII in own or other school, 26: total, 731.
- (2.) Repeated Standard VI work, 100.
- (3.) Occupations of 1923 Standard VI or other pupils who left school at the end of 1923 or during 1924: Postal service, 29; Railway service, 8; factory, 26; farm-work, 148; domestic service, 71; domestic work at own home, 188; sawmill, 9; carpenter, 18; painter, 8; clerk, 15; shop-assistant, 61; plumber, 11; baker, 4; miscellaneous or unknown, 70: total, 666.

SUBJECTS OF INSTRUCTION.

Reading.—During our visits we found among a large proportion of teachers a disposition to widen the range of the reading-matter. This is a commendable feature of the work, and is largely due to the great extension of class libraries mentioned in our last report. Very careful attention continues to be given to "comprehension," while the elocutionary aspect of the reading continues to be quite satisfactory.

Speech-training.—Some slight faults of pronunciation were observed, and poor enunciation arising out of slothfulness rather than ignorance. We did not, however, find anything to cause alarm. Teachers have already been directed to give special attention to this matter during the ensuing year.

Spelling.—This subject is, in general, quite satisfactory. We find, however, in a number of cases that insufficient attention is given to the words which belong to the child's own vocabulary. It is evident that this is sometimes due to inadequate correction of written exercises, and failure to drill the individual child sufficiently in the correction of his own errors.

Writing.—Where this subject is really taught from the blackboard we have little or no fault to find. We notice, however, that where the pupils' books show excess of exercises in mere transcription without adequate blackboard work the writing is poor. The faults in this subject arise, in our opinion, from the following causes (other than that already mentioned): Poor discipline, wrong posture in desk, wrong position of book, wrong method of holding pen, unsuitable pens. A scrutiny of the proficiency schedules (both those of the district Inspectors and those of exchange Inspectors) shows that the writing of Standard VI pupils must be regarded as very satisfactory. Seldom do we find less than 60 per cent. of marks, while many of the marks given range from 75 to 85 per cent.

Composition.—We feel that much still remains to be done to bring this subject up to a really satisfactory condition. In some cases we find that the subject is not really taught; in others, that the child is not being allowed full and free expression of his thoughts, but is being restricted to the use of some preconceived form in the mind of the teacher. We should expect, from the extensive matter used for purposes of reading, that pupils would gain facility and force of expression. This is one of the uses of literature which the teacher is being constantly urged to turn to good account. Further help in composition should be looked for in oral discussion of the matter of the reading, geography, history, and nature-study lessons. This can only be done by the insistence on good continuous oral answers in preference to a brief reply to leading questions. Greater care should be taken in the selection of subjects, and the skeleton essay found in books of "English" should entirely disappear from the methods of teaching.