

Subsequently a confidential report containing a fairly elaborate criticism and suggestions was furnished to the teacher. At the second visits, which commenced in June, improvement was looked for in those points which had been adversely criticized, and in addition tests were set in such subjects as the Inspector deemed advisable. After the second visit a confidential criticism, designed to show the standard of efficiency of the class and the directions in which improvement could be effected, was furnished to the teacher, while a general report on the school was prepared, a copy being sent to the Board.

During the year certain Canterbury schools were, for the purpose of inspection, exchanged for schools of similar grade in Nelson and Otago, and the Senior Inspector was for three months in charge of the Wellington District. We thus had the pleasure of inspecting schools in the neighbouring provinces, and we wish to say that the experience proved both interesting and instructive.

#### SCHEMES AND WORK-BOOKS.

We are pleased to note a decided improvement in drawing up the yearly schemes, especially in the matter of setting out the aims and compiling the programme of work. In one respect, however, it is desirable that a further improvement be made—viz., in setting out more fully the methods it is proposed to employ. These at present mostly err on the side of brevity, and consequently limit the usefulness of our visits by leaving us to guess at the extent of the teacher's knowledge of class-room practice or to ascertain it by possibly needless discussion. The work-books are generally posted in a useful manner, but the too-frequent absence of records of correlation suggests that much effort is being wasted, and that the natural linking-up of subjects is being overlooked.

#### TEACHERS' ANNUAL EXAMINATION REPORTS.

These have, in general, been drawn up with due care and in proper form. Two or three points, however, call for comment. The new classification is occasionally found to be inconsistent with the teacher's award of marks. In reading and composition, moreover, some teachers—and not all of them inexperienced teachers either—award marks that are manifestly too high, the qualitative scale of marks given in the directions being in those cases practically ignored. In a comparatively large number of instances, too, the instruction requiring that every case of retardation shall be indicated and explained has been misunderstood or overlooked. For the purpose of the teachers' annual report a "retardate" may be defined as a pupil over two years on the roll or over eight years of age who is retained in the P. division at the beginning of the year; a pupil who is nine years one month old or over when classified S1 at the beginning of the year; a pupil who is ten years one month old or over when classified S2 at the beginning of the year; and so on for the other standards. An investigation covering a considerable number of schools of all grades shows that on the average the retardates number about 12 per cent. of the school roll, and that the percentage of retardates varies considerably in different schools.

#### SUBJECTS OF INSTRUCTION.

*English.*—The oral-speech training that is a recognized part of the course in English is undoubtedly having a good effect in correcting slovenliness and discouraging bad fashions of speech, and in creating a fairly good standard of pronunciation. There is some want of uniformity in the pronunciation of our pupils, but that is generally due to conflict of authority; where there is general agreement as to what is correct—e.g., in the case of the aspirate—our schools have been conspicuously successful. It is, after all, the post-primary stage, when the youth is looking about him for models to imitate and ideals to aspire to, that fixes the standard of values in speech, as in other things; and it is after the steady pressure of the training of the primary school has been removed that unlovely fashions of pronunciation and idiom are apt to be adopted.

*Composition and reading* are distinctly on the up grade. In the former subject the country schools have advanced to a gratifying degree, and the children produce work which compares favourably with that of their town contemporaries. Strangely enough, however, the instances are rare where the latter subject is taught with the express aim of benefiting the former in vocabulary. This is still left largely to chance. The scientific treatment of silent reading has received attention, and typical readers containing useful hints on treatment have been lent to several schools in the district. Spelling is not altogether satisfactory, as it is too often divorced from composition and reading. The old dictation method of testing is too widely employed.

*English grammar* shows one outstanding weakness—the parts of speech and their functions are not well known. Even the Standard VI classes in their final test in many cases revealed a hazy knowledge of this important phase of study.

*Recitation* has improved in delivery and expression, and due attention is being given to tone, inflection, enunciation, and articulation. In the matter of appreciation of the content, however, we cannot speak so flatteringly. It is not desirable to force adult interpretation of poetry upon children, but they should certainly be expected to supply their own, and to do it confidently. This is not the case at present.

*Writing* continues to be well taught in the majority of our schools, and in some a very creditable standard has been attained. There are, however, too many teachers who fail to maintain a uniform standard throughout their schools, and whose pupils show little skill in obtaining the correct weight, size, slope, formation, and spacing of letters, so necessary in the cultivation of free running penmanship.