

be necessary before the pupils will possess the mechanical skill to produce writing comparable in neatness and uniformity with the carefully-taught writing of former years. In other words, the mere setting of a copy will not produce good writing; there must be careful supervision, stimulation to secure earnest effort, careful scrutiny and correction, and demonstration followed by still further practice; the subject must be intelligently taught.

Wanganui.—In the great majority of schools a distinct improvement is noted in the writing, but in the upper classes it is yet too laboured and slow. As a remedy for this, definite brief writing-lessons should be given several times weekly, attention being paid to the cultivation of rhythmic movement closely associated with speed, and beauty and accuracy of letter-formation. Good writing is largely a matter of discipline—a refusal on the part of the teacher to accept from the pupil any written work that does not show a definite measure of care and neatness, and the cultivation of a feeling of pride in work well done.

Otago.—The majority of the teachers are giving regular attention to developing a free style of writing. The poor quality of much of the work is mainly due to the lack of supervision of all the written work, and failure to insist on correct posture. More attention should be given to the making of good figures. In a small number of schools we were very pleased with the standard of written work, but the development of a “writing conscience” is very desirable.

Spelling.

Wanganui.—The quality of the work in this subject shows definite improvement, as the result of the careful instruction in the words connected with the pupils’ written vocabulary. The improvement is most noticeable in the written expression in composition. The greatest weakness is apparent in the tests given upon the lists of words taught. This, we feel, is due to the inadequate revision of words taught not only during the year, but in the previous standards. We cannot stress too strongly the ever-present necessity for frequent and regular revision on as wide a scale as possible. In connection with all such revision, lists of errors should be kept for further teaching purposes.

Wellington.—Spelling has met with very fair success, especially with the smaller words of everyday use, but not in a degree commensurate with the time spent on it. Perhaps one of the causes of this is the very general adoption of a spelling list from which five words a day are selected. Words in such a list are as isolated and unconnected as pebbles on a beach. A large amount of time is consequently spent in finding dictionary meanings and incorporating the words in what are too often most unsatisfactory sentences. Time is thus wasted in useless and almost purposeless labour. This is the more to be regretted since every pupil has the *School Journal*, in which the great majority of words he needs are displayed in a context more perfect and more intelligible than any dictionary can provide. The list can serve as a very useful check, and as an alternative means of quick revision; but since spelling is only a part of the problem of comprehending and writing the language, no mere list can replace the written page in the teaching of this branch of English.

Nelson.—Spelling still appears to be the most unsatisfactory subject; indeed, in our opinion, it is getting steadily worse. We have noticed, too, that where spelling is taught from spelling lists—apart altogether from reading lessons—the results are the most disappointing. The plan of limiting the spelling to twenty-five or thirty words a week, and a total of some 2,500 words for a S. VI pupil savours somewhat of the “go-slow” policy. With most children learning to spell is drudgery, but the attempt to avoid this necessary but tiresome work—by reducing it to the barest minimum—is, in our opinion, largely responsible for the unsatisfactory spelling of our school-children to-day.

Otago.—We regret to note that the quality of the spelling is not improving. In many schools and classes (though the work in the set list for the day may be excellently done) we have found the spelling in the general written exercises little short of appalling, and we have often found it necessary to write copious suggestions to the teachers for dealing with the subject.

Southland.—Although spelling is systematically taught in the great majority of the schools, the results as judged by the quality of the spelling in such written exercises as composition are on the whole disappointing. There may be a feeling that spelling is a subject apart, a subject that is “got up” for examination purposes, and it may be that some pupils do not seriously try to apply it to the use for which it is intended. We recommend that from the beginning of written expression in P. 4 the formation of bad habits in respect of spelling be resisted. It is a fallacy to assert, as some educationists do assert, that when a child is writing a composition exercise the free flow of his expression is checked if he is required to be careful about his spelling and writing. In these mechanical arts he must be habituated to correctness and neatness. The experience of examiners is that normally children who write good composition exercises are also the ones that spell correctly and write neatly. Acting on the suggestion of the syllabus, many teachers are resuscitating with good results two forms of spelling exercise that have been more or less discarded during recent years—viz., transcription and “dictation.”

English.

Auckland.—Essay-writing is much as it has been for some years. Pleasing progress is made up to Standard IV, but noticeable advance is not evident in the higher classes. In fact many pupils write just as well in Standard IV as they do in Standard VI. This is mainly due to the fact that few teachers succeed in drawing up a scheme in essay-writing that shows any effective means of enabling children’s powers of expression to increase as they rise through the standards. It seems to be a case of set, mark, and correct, without sufficient constructive work, and without