

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE.

INTRODUCTION.

The syllabus aims to give greater prominence than heretofore to the teaching of English in primary schools. It urges attention to the manner in which the child speaks as well as to the manner in which he writes. It also recognizes that facility and accuracy in expression are not to be gained by memorizing grammatical rules, but rather by the intelligent study of good models. At the same time it gives grammar a place, if only a subordinate one, in the school curriculum. Such grammar as is included is of the type that may be termed "general grammar," or the grammar common to most modern languages. It is to be studied mainly through synthetic exercises. Grammar of this limited and general kind is likely to be of service to the pupil when he subsequently begins the study of a foreign language, and of service also when he finds instant decision necessary as to the accuracy of alternative forms of expression. The syllabus emphasizes at every stage the importance of accurate speech, correct spelling, correct arrangement of ideas, and the extension of the child's vocabulary. The teacher's aims should be to develop in his pupils facility in expressing their thoughts clearly, fluently, and correctly in speech or in writing, to train the pupils in the proper use of books and thus to foster an appreciation of English literature.

Regular training in correct speech or utterance should be given in all classes, to secure, through the correct use of the vocal organs, distinct articulation, clear enunciation of consonants, and purity of vowel sound. Particular attention should be paid to children whose speech is in any way defective. The method by which this training is to be effected is to be clearly indicated in the teacher's scheme of work. Every teacher should make a survey of the speech errors in his class, record them, and adapt his exercises accordingly. The value of the singing lesson in affording training in articulation must not be overlooked.

Since children acquire language by imitation it is clear that the teacher's speech should be as pure as possible, distinct in enunciation, well modulated, and free from affectation and vulgarism.

In the case of reading, emphasis is laid in the lower classes on the importance of the pupil's becoming word perfect—that is, mastering the initial mechanical difficulties in the subject. Hence more prominence is given to oral reading in the lower than in the higher classes, where fuller attention must necessarily be given to difficulties in the subject-matter. In all classes pupils should keep in a convenient place—*e.g.*, the *School Journal*—a record of the books read. In judging reading, consideration should be given to (i) the ability of the child to read aloud with clearness of utterance, correct pronunciation, audibility, fluency, and natural expression of books of reasonable difficulty; (ii) his ability to give the content and meaning of the matter read either orally or silently; (iii) the range of books covered.

No particular system of teaching writing will be made compulsory, but the pupil must be so taught that by the time he is ready to enter Standard V (Form I) he shall have acquired mastery of the cursive style of handwriting, in which speed and legibility are to be regarded as the essential characteristics. It will be noted that in the syllabus teachers are advised to use print-script in the Preparatory Division and a free style of cursive writing in the standard classes. The slope of the cursive writing should not be less than 70° from the horizontal.

Spelling should be taught systematically, and the teacher should not rely on the mere setting of lists of words to be learned by the pupils. It is most important that each teacher should set out in his scheme of work for the year a definite method of teaching the subject. Good use may be made of minimal lists that the pupils have compiled under the teacher's guidance, but care should be taken not to restrict the pupil's vocabulary. Any spelling authorized by the Oxford Dictionary is to be accepted in the schools.

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PREPARATORY DIVISION.

LANGUAGE :—

(a) *Speaking or Talking*.—"Training the child to talk freely and distinctly may not unfairly be described as the primary task for any infant school or class." (Handbook of Suggestions: English Board of Education.)

"It is emphatically the teacher's duty to teach all his pupils standard English and to speak it clearly and with expression." (Teaching of English in England.)