

It should be explained that the number of schools stated in the table under consideration is the number of separate sites occupied by schools. In some former tables there were cases in which the boys' and girls' departments, separately organized, were reckoned as two schools. The number now given represents not the number of districts, nor the number of separate departments, but the number of separate buildings on separate sites. It will be observed that of these there were in September, 1877, twelve more than in September, 1876, and twenty-nine more than in September, 1875, so that one-fourth of all the separate schools in the district have been opened within two years.

The proportion of children attending the schools, to the population, is as follows :—

Quarter ending 30th Sept.	Estimated Population.	Number of Attendants.	Percentage.	Estimated Number between 5 and 15 Years.	Number between 5 and 15 Years attending.	Percentage.
1871	47,500	4,096	8·6	11,411	3,842	33·66
1872	48,900	5,970	12·2	12,200	5,664	46·42
1873	51,510	7,695	14·9	13,100	7,340	56·40
1874	64,000	10,136	15·8	16,200	9,840	60·74
1875	68,500	11,874	17·3	17,200	11,481	66·75
1876	82,993	13,534	16·3	21,511	13,100	60·90
Dec. 31, 1877	89,227	15,513	17·4	23,125	14,249	61·61

From this table it appears that a large number of children of school age do not attend the district schools; and the remarks made above, so far as they show that the numbers on the school rolls are in excess of the true attendance, must be regarded as showing also that the disproportion between population and attendance is greater than at first sight appears. The Board has no means of knowing how many of the children not found in district schools are under private instruction, or taught in other schools; but it may be assumed that if this were ascertained it would by no means account for the large disproportion which is apparent. The form of school returns, prepared by the department and issued in January, provided for a statement of the estimated number of untaught children. In a few cases the Committees have failed to make the returns here referred to, and many others have professed themselves unable to supply the particular information which bears on this point. The total number of untaught children within the districts, so far as reported to the Board, is only about 800. But the rapid progress of settlement in parts of the country only lately brought under cultivation has resulted in the isolation of many families, and has placed others in groups so small as to render it impossible for them as yet to apply for the establishment of schools with any hope of success. The fifteen districts last proclaimed, and three or four separate neighbourhoods which are now seeking to be formed into districts, represent a considerable number of the children who appear thus far to be neglected; but there must be many places from which demands for school accommodation will soon be submitted to the present Board, or the new Boards, for consideration.

The instructions issued by the department for the compiling of this report contemplated the presentation of returns of school attendance, &c., in forms slightly differing from those which the Board has adopted. The Board desires to acknowledge your courtesy in consenting to accept the information in the shape in which it had been already cast, and now directs me to suggest that, with a view to uniformity in the reports of next year, regulations as to the keeping of records should be issued as soon as possible, and that the department should prepare and publish a school register, to be kept in such a way as to afford precisely the knowledge which you will in future require. The forms which the Board has directed to be used were printed in the appendix to the last annual report, but hitherto there has been no register exactly adapted to these forms; and the expectation of a nearer approach to a uniform system, to be effected under the Act of 1877, has induced the Board to abstain from publishing a school register for its own schools. The Board observes with satisfaction that the department has adopted the method of excluding the attendance, on all occasions on which it falls below one-half of the roll number, from the computation by which the working average is ascertained, and directs attention to the very slight difference between the working average and the strict average. The difference in each of the first three quarters of the year was about 2½ per cent., and in the last quarter very little more than 1 per cent.

The ordinary examinations for scholarships were held in the month of June, and were conducted as usual by the Rev. W. J. Habens and J. Colborne-Veel, Esq. One hundred and thirteen candidates (including three who entered for the Foresters' Scholarship only) presented themselves, divided among the different classes as follows:—A, 21 boys, 20 girls; B, 24 and 16; C, 17 and 6; D, 8 and 1. The successful candidates were—in Class A (boys under eleven years of age, and girls under twelve), Elizabeth Milsom, William Ward, and Frances Taylor; in Class B (boys twelve years, girls thirteen), William Craddock, Mahala Mills, Frank Dunnage; in Class C (boys thirteen years, girls fourteen), Caroline Woodley, Annie Hallamore, William Gilberthorpe; in Class D (boys fourteen years, girls fifteen), Janette Grossman, John Boswell.

The scholarships now current are held as shown in the table on the following page.

The scholarships are of the annual value of £40, and tenable for two years. The only exception is the scholarship held by William Gilberthorpe, which he holds for one year only, as successor to a scholar who surrendered it after enjoying it for a year. To the last three examinations girls have been admitted, and hitherto they have been allowed to compete with boys one year their juniors. It has been resolved that in future boys and girls shall enter on equal terms as to age. Your permission having been first sought and granted, the Board has resolved to apply to the continued payment of claims on these scholarships, and to the issue of a new series next June, the balance on Maintenance Account reported here as at the 31st of December last—a balance arising from local sources. The report of the Examiners, and the papers set by them, are printed in the Appendix (D).