

attendance is marked by a fair degree of regularity ; whereas in those schools where the teaching is unskilful, perfunctory, and lifeless, the scholars naturally attend irregularly and take but little interest in their work. Teaching of the kind last mentioned is rapidly disappearing, and in at least two-thirds of the schools now in operation the teachers are zealous, and fairly trained for their important duties. Punctuality is, on the whole, well observed. The masters of the town schools and of some few of those in the country have printed absentee forms, easy to fill up, in which they let parents know of the absence of their children, and request their co-operation in securing greater regularity. Perhaps the general adoption of these forms might have a good effect on the attendance.

Again, as regards our town schools, it is gratifying to note that a noticeable falling-off has taken place in the number of children moving about from school to school. Such changes are to some extent unavoidable, as parents remove from one part of the town to another ; but they are too often due to mere caprice, and are prejudicial both to the progress of the children and the welfare of the schools.

The organization of all schools where more than one teacher is employed may be stated to be quite as satisfactory as the nature of the buildings will admit. The time-tables in these schools also show a fairly judicious arrangement of work and employment of the staff. Teachers of small schools still find it very difficult to so arrange their work as to overtake the varied requirements of the standards, and we would respectfully recommend that such teachers be afforded an opportunity of attending the model school recently established in connection with the practising department of the Normal School, for the purpose of seeing the best methods of instruction and organization. The general management of the infant departments of the larger schools is, we think, steadily improving. A fair share of attention is given to the special needs of infants, and an effort is made to make the time spent in school pass as pleasantly and profitably as possible. There is still, in a few instances, a tendency towards making the learning by rote of Royal Reader No. I., a little slate writing, and the ability to add a few columns of figures together, the sole objects of the teaching. In country schools where the number of children below Standard I. is very small, and where they have no teacher or room to themselves, it would be unreasonable to expect much in the way of infant training. In such schools all that can be expected is that they should be taught their letters, a little writing, tables, &c., in much the same way as the children working in standards are taught. We question very much the advantages obtained by sending children between five and seven years of age to these schools. They are certainly out of the way of their parents, but in the way of the teachers. Our own experience leads us to believe that, as a general rule, children who begin their school life at seven years of age are just as far advanced at ten as those who began at five. The time between five and seven years of age spent in a small school is too often time wasted, and a wearisome toil rather than a pleasure.

Table No. II. shows the number presented in each standard, the number passed, the average age at which the scholars passed, the percentage of passes, and the number of schools at which scholars were presented in the different standards :—

TABLE NO. II.

	Number presented.	Number passed.	Average Age.	Percentage of Passes.	Number of Schools at which Scholars were presented.
			Yrs.		
Standard VI. ...	135	86	14·5	64	34
Standard V. ...	440	220	13·6	50	76
Standard IV. ...	1,075	597	12·8	56	107
Standard III. ...	1,878	1,130	11·7	60	121
Standard II. ...	2,115	1,802	10·2	85	129
Standard I. ...	2,081	1,923	8·9	92	128
Totals ...	7,724	5,758	...	74	...

From the foregoing table it will be seen that, although there is a considerable increase in the amount of candidates presented for examination in the four higher standards, yet there is a slight falling-off in the percentages gained in these standards. A far greater number of schools than was formerly the case are now attempting the work of the higher and more difficult standards, and in some of these the teachers have as yet failed to understand the full amount and quality of what is demanded to secure a pass. Under all the circumstances, the results, at least so far as regards the majority of the schools in the district, may be considered fairly creditable. In too many schools the inferior results are undoubtedly due either to the irregular attendance, or to the frequent changing of teachers. In the case of some few schools the low percentages gained do not admit of any satisfactory explanation : the requirements for passing, although somewhat different from previous years, have not been perceptibly raised, and the failures can therefore be attributed only to the want of thoroughness in the teaching and injudicious classification. The children presented in Standards II. and I. were, with comparatively few exceptions, carefully and intelligently prepared for such work as they attempted. Head-teachers are now beginning to recognize the fact that very much of the future success of their pupils depends on the nature of the instruction and training that they receive in the lower classes, and that it will not do to leave the teaching of these classes altogether in the hands of pupil-teachers. More supervision is adopted, and the children are frequently tested in the work gone over.

The subjects forming the present course of instruction are, as might be expected, taught in our schools with varying success and intelligence. And although we fail to see the great usefulness of making any general remarks on the way the different subjects of the syllabus are treated, yet, in accordance with the prevailing custom of Inspectors in other education districts, we have determined to point out briefly what has come under our notice.