

ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS.

Subject.	Inferior.	Fair.	Satisfactory.	Good.	Very Good.	Excellent.
Poetry ...	23 schools ...	34 schools	27 schools	24 schools	20 schools	5 schools
Drill and exercises ...	19 " ...	19 "	45 "	26 "	19 "	5 "
Singing ...	Not taught in 35 schools	17 "	29 "	25 "	19 "	8 "
Needlework ...	Not taught in 61 schools	6 "	28 "	17 "	15 "	6 "
Comprehension of lan- guage of reader	Inferior in 25 schools	31 "	30 "	24 "	21 "	2 "

We offer some short comments on the results here shown, premising, however, that where there is censure it is supposed to fall on those teachers whose schools do not reach the satisfactory standard.

The result in grammar is not such as one can view with complacency. Failure in this subject is due almost entirely to mental confusion begotten of ill-directed, spiritless teaching. So long as teachers will not take sufficient trouble to go to the heart of the matter, so that children's first notions may be clear and firmly grounded, so long will grammar be a subject hateful in school and futile as a means of mental discipline. The greater success achieved in history is in some measure due to the fact that the teaching of the subject makes a less rigorous demand on the teacher's power, and in some measure to its popularity with the children. The outcome of the examination of Standard II. geography supports the opinion expressed on the same subject as taught to the upper standards. As in the case of grammar, unless first notions are clear and fixed further progress is difficult and uncertain. Among the class-subjects the relative importance of elementary science and object-lessons appear to be fully appreciated by the teachers—a matter, certainly, for congratulation. As to mental arithmetic, we offer no comment beyond pointing out that the result squares with the remarks concerning arithmetic as a standard subject.

Touching the additional subjects, we are of opinion that too many schools come short of the satisfactory standard in poetry. This is the more disappointing in that the chief fault—viz., mechanical sing-song—is one of easy remedy. By no one would the remedy be hailed with more delight than by the children themselves. In drill and exercises the district appears to stand well, but it should be noted that in most schools only the disciplinary exercises are taken up. We again observe with regret the apathy shown in the district in the matter of military drill: in only one or two schools do the children receive such instruction as would enable them to become a serviceable volunteer company. The time may come when those in authority will marvel why such sleepiness had been shown in a concern so vital to the national existence. As to singing, we believe this district compares favourably with others, but there are still too many schools in which the subject is not taught. With regard to needlework, we note with satisfaction that the ladies of the Southland Educational Institute recommend that the Inspector should, instead of examining elaborate finished garments, examine samples of work done during the year, and see the pupils practically do some prescribed portion of work. This method would be at once a relief to the teachers and a much surer test of the proficiency of the pupils. We confess ourselves disappointed with the standard of proficiency attained by the pupils in the comprehension of the language in their reading-books. Generally speaking, one might hazard an opinion on the degree of intelligence ruling in a class or school on this very matter; for, if pupils have clear and readily-expressible notions regarding the language of the reading-books in daily use, they are not likely to be backward in other subjects.

In the great majority of our schools the general tone is very good; in no small number it is excellent. In a few, however—in some even in which very different things might be expected—we have noticed shortcomings so serious as to raise doubts in our minds as to whether the prevalent tone will exercise an entirely healthful influence on the lives of the pupils. At more than one school we have seen a lamentable want of punctuality, a detestable habit of loitering, a depraved tendency to scribble on, cut, and carve school property, want of respect towards teachers, and habitual attempts to practise dishonesty at the annual examinations. Nor does the fault lie to any great extent with the pupils; it lies almost entirely in the instability of the school *régime*—an instability induced by the absence of that firmness, vigilance, and determination which alone, in primary schools, afford a true basis for the exercise of gentleness, goodness, and mercy. Breaches of moral order in a school must be reprobated in no measured terms, and we shall, as in duty bound, continue to wage uncompromising war on any school government that makes such breaches easy.

We are, &c.,

The Secretary, Education Board.

JAMES HENDRY, }
GEO. D. BRAIK, } Inspectors.

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