

The following table shows the summary of examination results for the year :—

Classes.				Presented.	Present.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	
							Yrs.	mos.
Above Standard VI.	...	...	...	37	...	...	...	...
Standard VI.	...	...	...	148	146	113	14	4
" V.	...	...	...	315	302	220	13	7
" IV.	...	...	...	535	506	389	12	7
" III.	...	...	...	592	571	452	11	8
" II.	...	...	...	597	579	459	10	4
" I.	...	...	...	536	515	440	9	2
Preparatory	...	...	...	1,357	...	...	...	...
Totals	...	...	...	4,117	2,619	2,073	11	11*

* Mean of average age.

These figures do not vary to any great extent from those of last year. In the average ages, however, there is a marked decrease, and the mean of the average age is lower by two months. The number of absentees is large. It is desirable that all pupils on the roll should be present, for even if they have not been long at the school the Inspector desires to ascertain that satisfactory progress has been made. I consider that a large number of absentees without apparent satisfactory cause does not redound to the credit of a school.

I regret that, as in the previous year, owing to lack of time, all schools were not inspected, though some of those not formally reported upon were visited, and some schools were visited more than once. This is to be regretted, for at inspection effective direction and assistance can be given more readily than at the examination.

In my previous reports I have fully discussed the subjects of the syllabus, and have little of a general character to add to what has been already written. I find it much more productive of good results to issue circulars dealing with the several subjects in greater detail than is advisable or convenient in a general report. These contain notes and suggestions on methods, and, while not intended to cramp or limit individuality in instruction, are found beneficial by many teachers. To some of the subjects, however, I desire to draw brief attention.

Reading is now a subject in which the pupil must pass to obtain the standard certificate, and this has induced teachers to study the subject more closely, and to give more attention to the principles and essentials of good reading. As a consequence, there has been a steady improvement in the quality, and, except in a few schools where the reading has always been inferior, one seldom finds it necessary to fail a child for reading only. On the whole, therefore, this apparently severe regulation has borne good fruit. One sometimes finds that the correct pronunciation of words is still considered the chief essential of reading, and that during the lessons the only errors corrected are those in pronunciation. This, however, is only one essential of reading, and, while it must not be neglected, in a sense it may be termed mechanical, for it can be found from a dictionary even after the pupils leave school; whereas correct modulation, inflexion, phrasing, and so on, being not readily acquired after school-life, must be taught, and must become in a measure matters of habit. I see no reason why the terms "modulation," "phrasing," &c., should not be known and understood by the pupils. The teacher could then indicate the *character* of the error made, and the pupil should endeavour to make the correction without further assistance. This is in accordance with one of the first principles of teaching, that "the pupil should be told only so much as will lead him to discover the truth for himself." This method also leads to a more intelligent comprehension of the passage, for to correct the error the pupil must endeavour to discover the writer's meaning, and in some measure must enter into his feelings. The wider course of reading now prescribed, and the Board's encouragement of school libraries, will do much to elevate the reading, to foster a taste for literature, and to increase the knowledge and intelligence of the pupils. Though not generally tried, my last year's suggestion—that during the reading-lessons the best readers should be allowed to read silently some selected work—has been adopted in a few instances, and I have noticed a marked improvement in the intelligence of the general reading. It should be noted that only the best readers should be allowed to bring books; this would encourage the weaker pupils to improve, and thus join the more favoured friends.

Very often the foundation of bad reading is laid in the preparatory classes. While the experienced teacher of a large school places one of the best of his staff in charge of the infant department, the inexperienced teacher looks upon it as "only the preparatory classes," and does not take the trouble to see that the work, though elementary, proceeds upon the best lines. Indeed, it is because of the inefficient instruction of the lower infants that the work in Standards I. and II. is made laborious. So strongly endowed with the imitative faculty are the infants, and so greatly interested are they in their work, that their ideas become deeply rooted. If they are allowed to read monotonously, monotony is to them essential to reading, and this idea once implanted is difficult to eradicate. Much to the surprise of a teacher who has asked me to test the reading in Standards I. and II., as it did not appear satisfactory, I have required