

The conditions under which the scholars have worked were, with one exception, similar to those of previous years. The attendance continued regular, and the Board had again to provide several special prizes and certificates for pupils that during their school career had attended for five or more years without a single absence. The number of uncertificated teachers is still a noticeable feature. Correspondence classes have been conducted with a view to granting opportunity for advancement, and it is intended to continue the courses during the coming year. An improvement in the conditions appears in the increase in the number of half-days the schools have been open. In seven schools the number was 430 or more, and in nine others the school year was 420 or more. Eleven others exceeded 410, and only seven failed to reach this number, two being below 400. These figures are the highest presented for several years.

Secondary education has practically been confined to the work of the secondary classes of the District High School. Six other pupils remained a year after obtaining a proficiency certificate, but their aim was mainly revisal and completion. The students of the secondary classes prepared, in the third year, a course covered by the Matriculation Examination.

The primary schools, with three exceptions, obtained a record for the year ranging from satisfactory to very good, and the general standard of efficiency is high. A feature of the year's operations was the adoption of a new method of formulating and testing the work of scholars under sole teachers. Many of such teachers are without special qualification or experience, and they welcome direction and assistance. At the beginning of each half-year a detailed course was prescribed, and in June and December tests were supplied. The teachers were at liberty to modify such tests when circumstances required this, but it was rarely necessary. All the work of the pupils was corrected and marked by the teachers, and the results recorded. In addition, all the written answers in June were forwarded for inspection, and in December those in geography and drawing. In geography the programme provided for a free use of nature-study, maps, and diagrams, and as little as possible of text-books. The physical, mathematical, and commercial branches were so correlated that they formed a consecutive course, which proved acceptable and effective. While other tests were made and recorded by the teachers, the provision of a special biannual uniform test served its purpose in securing greater efficiency and in offering a valuable opportunity for advice and direction, apart from that afforded by inspection visits. Several schools of higher grades, at the request of the head teachers, were included in the scheme.

With reference to the general work of the schools, the instruction in English subjects in a very few instances failed to merit commendation. Reading and composition occasionally showed defects, due to the lack of skill and knowledge on the part of the teachers and from the adoption of too low a standard of expression. Writing frequently suffered from the acceptance of inaccurate exercises. The general achievement, however, was creditable and encouraging.

The average attainment in arithmetic was commendable, and was the result of the application of good methods of instruction. Where weakness appeared it was due to the neglect of oral practice, clear statement, and understanding based on the study of concrete illustration.

The adoption of a uniform programme in geography brings into prominence the consideration of the result of the tests in geography. Evidence was produced that the practical nature of the instruction and the rearrangement of the course have stimulated interest in both teachers and pupils. Certainly the response to the tests has advanced in clearness and fullness.

The results in drawing have not been so generally satisfactory. With numerous exceptions, the study and practice fail in initiative and understanding. Neatness in outline, perception in the drawing of simple objects, the notion of design, and practical application of geometrical exercises are too frequently insufficiently appreciated as essential features in the value of the course.

The additional subjects are practically all included in schools staffed with more than one teacher, and the majority are undertaken in all schools. To some of these brief reference is made. Physical instruction was included in the syllabus of practically all schools. Its scope varied from a few manual and breathing exercises to the more elaborate course of the school Cadets. Usually the exercises were performed with smartness and enthusiasm. Singing is, unfortunately, omitted in the majority of the schools, being confined to one school of Grade III and to five of the seven schools of higher grades. The reason for such omission is the lack of knowledge on the part of teachers, many of whom have not had an opportunity to obtain the necessary training and instruction. Where the subject was included a good standard of vocal music was attained. Needlework was taught in all schools in which there were girls in standard classes. It was unusual to meet with a weak specimen of work, and the general result is worthy of the importance of the subject.

In history it is necessary in all the schools to group classes. During the year a plan has been adopted according to which the Fourth and Sixth Standards prepare a course for written examination, while the Third and Fifth read with the next higher class the same respective courses, but are not expected to qualify for a written test. It follows, therefore, that the pupils devote two years to the preparation of either course. This arrangement allows the grouping of classes, and renders feasible the achievement of definite results. Although in the last year only a beginning in the scheme was made, a great improvement has already appeared.

A suitable programme of nature-study was presented in all schools above Grade III, and this was also done in a number of schools under sole teachers. In the latter this is not compulsory, but in all there is required an indication of the extent in which the methods of nature-study have been applied to the instruction in other subjects. Similarly, while at least a short course of handwork is usually presented, its service in connexion with other branches of study is also recognized. To inculcate an appreciation of the importance of such application of method, a class was in operation during part of the year for the instruction of teachers in the correlation of nature-study and handwork with the remaining subjects of the primary course. In a few schools a limited amount of work was devoted to school-gardens, but during the past year the climatic conditions were unfavourable.