

The following table gives the number present at the annual examination of the various schools:—

Standard.	Public Schools.		Roman Catholic Schools.		Other Registered Schools.	
	Number on Roll.	Present at Examination.	Number on Roll.	Present at Examination.	Number on Roll.	Present at Examination.
VII	149	147	27	26	3	3
VI	989	978	103	103	41	41
V	1,333	1,307	132	130	49	49
IV	1,540	1,510	130	126	77	77
III	1,648	1,606	140	139	70	66
II	1,707	1,647	162	154	57	57
I	1,783	1,739	159	153	63	61
P.	4,448	4,281	413	394	162	155
Totals, 1918	13,597	13,215	1,266	1,225	523	510
Totals, 1917	13,235	12,729	1,199	1,118	685	645

Registered Private Schools.—In regard to these schools, we again have to report upon the difficulty of getting the necessary statistical information, and we strongly urge that, as a condition of registration, the controlling authorities should be required to furnish returns of enrolment, classification, and attendance.

School Buildings.—The buildings are maintained in reasonable condition, and there is no evidence of want of care on the part of the teachers. The Board responds readily enough to our recommendations for improvements and additions, and when these are being effected the opportunity is taken of modernizing the buildings as far as is necessary. The grounds are maintained in fair order, but there is room for the display of more enthusiasm on the part of the local authorities. If the school is to be the centre of humanity in the district the buildings and grounds should certainly present a model appearance, and we should be glad to see the parents and citizens forming associations with such object in view.

Proficiency Examination.—The closing of the schools owing to the influenza made it impossible for us to hold the central examination of S6 in nineteen schools, including four high schools. In all the other schools our examination visit had occurred prior to the outbreak. In considering the estimates of the teachers we found much diversity of procedure in respect to the determination of awards. Generally speaking, the marks were too high; in one or two instances the maximum marks obtainable were assigned in every subject; in others proficiency certificates were denied where the marks awarded would show that the pupils were entitled to receive them. Again, estimates were expressed so vaguely as to afford us no assistance in coming to a decision, while in a few cases, where the pupils' work had been forwarded, we judged that the standard of marking was too low. The results are much higher than those of 1917, but are not entirely out of keeping with our own observations during the year, and in the schools in which we ourselves had examined S6 there is a very substantial increase shown. Altogether 1,188 pupils were presented. Of these, 768, or 64·6 per cent., gained proficiency certificates, and 199, or 16·7 per cent., gained certificates of competency, 22 being endorsed.

Subjects of Instruction.—To the remarks offered last year we may add the following:—

Reading.—Pending the Department's issue of suggestions in phonic exercises, we have arranged a series of exercises for issue next year. More attention should be given to the intellectual aspect of reading—the grasping of the thought and the cultivation of the power to reproduce the ideas. This is especially desirable in the higher standards, where the mechanical difficulties should no longer be met with. Some seven thousand supplementary readers have been issued by the Board during the year to provide a wider range in reading, and a further large supply is on order. In addition, we note a very considerable activity in the school-library department. The preparation of spelling-lists has had a good effect, and spelling shows a marked improvement, especially in S6, where the faults noted in former years have almost disappeared.

Composition can further be improved by more attention to paragraphing to illustrate the logical arrangement of ideas. The use of picture composition in the lower classes has produced good results. Letter-writing should receive special treatment. The practice of adhering strictly to the prescription of a certain text-book, which is followed by so many teachers, is largely responsible for the lack of imagination and life which characterizes the essays. "The child's imitative powers alone are cultivated, while his creative strength is left to pine and wither."

In *Arithmetic* mental work is better done than formerly. Short methods should be more frequently used. The question of the modification of the requirements in arithmetic, particularly in the case of girls, might well receive consideration. After all, the practical utility of some of the rules is very doubtful, and the recent epidemic has taught the need for closer attention to domestic-science training.

In the centres especially good progress has been made in *drawing*, and we can show much admirable work.

A great improvement in *science* teaching has been evident in the southern part of the district. We perceive in this the effect of the special classes of instruction in science conducted there by the