

Standard Classes.				Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	
									Yrs.	mos.
S 7	...	...	...	7	...	...	...	...	...	...
S 6	...	...	...	95	6	...	34	55	14	8
S 5	...	...	...	242	12	16	103	111	14	3
S 4	...	...	...	398	22	29	111	236	12	11
S 3	...	...	...	533	42	47	152	292	12	1
S 2	...	...	...	672	42	47	135	448	10	4
S 1	...	...	...	601	43	38	60	460	9	4
P.	...	...	...	1,425	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	...	...	...	3,973	167	177	595	1,602	*	

* Mean of average age, 12 years 3 months.

The marks accorded for the class and additional subjects show that these are taught with very varying results in the different schools. The above results were obtained from a district in which there are very many small schools, including half-time and aided schools. Thirty-three of the schools examined by me had less than twenty-five scholars on the roll.

In the annual report presented in 1886 I dealt very fully with the conditions under which it seemed to me that small schools could be most efficiently carried on; further experience in the work of inspection has confirmed me in most of the views therein expressed. Many of the pupils attending these schools have to give material aid at home, in farm work, &c.; many of them have also long distances to walk daily. In a number of the small schools teachers have to conduct single-handed many classes. Making allowance for these and other drawbacks, some of which are referred to below, I consider the work done to be on the whole fair. Some of the inefficient teachers, with whom teaching has in olden times been a makeshift, whose employment could only have been a compromise owing to the difficulty formerly experienced of getting teachers who were qualified, have gradually found their way to other occupations. Several beneficial changes in this direction have taken place during the year in consequence of the reports sent in. In many of the schools visited good work was being done throughout, in others the work was passable or very uneven; while seventeen special reports on fifteen different schools were sent in owing to unsatisfactory results or methods of management. Many of the schools where the work ranged from passable to unsatisfactory suffered from the drawbacks above referred to, but also from others. Some were in charge of teachers who had had very little training in the art of teaching. The management of some was marked by want of energy, of thoroughness, of attention to detail, &c. In the case of these the reports sent in draw attention not only to results, but to such matters as ill-constructed or incomplete time tables, uncorrected home-work books, the ignoring of methods recommended by the Board or its Inspectors, or generally a style of management requiring to be braced.

But another cause affecting the work of the schools needs special notice. Nearly a third of the schools examined by me were at the time of my visit for examination being conducted by teachers who have been less than a year in charge. Though, particularly of late, an improvement has been going on in the *personnel* of the teaching staff, the improvement is not to be measured by such frequent changing, which cannot but tend to produce unrest in the minds of the teachers and to lessen their interest in the work of their schools.

In many of the schools the spelling was throughout the standards very bad. I have frequently had to point this out in reports on individual schools.

It has been felt here that the work of the syllabus is somewhat too much for schools which are conducted by one teacher. In such schools, feeling compelled to recognise the difficulties to be contended against, I have accorded a pass to all scholars who have shown proficiency in reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, and composition, provided that I found the other subjects had been taken up as well as the circumstances would permit.

Freehand drawing from the flat is fairly taught in a great number of schools; model drawing is quite neglected or, for the most part, poorly taught. The little that is attempted in geometrical drawing is fairly done. The suggestion made in my last report, that the work of the drawing master should be extended to the country schools, is being carried out with good results. His teachers' classes in the country are much appreciated. Some good drawing to scale is being done in the schools visited by him.

Some people, apparently misled by the fallacy that the whole education—technical and other—of children, should be obtained in the public schools, would thrust all kinds of subjects into the excellent prescribed course of instruction. Elementary science and drawing are the subjects having a technical bearing which really can be conveniently taught in the primary schools, and for them provision is made by the department's syllabus. It is a pity that the Board should continue in force its resolution *re* time to be devoted to laws of health, as it tends to cripple any effort to carry out properly the department's regulation *re* the teaching of the elements of physics, chemistry, and physiology. About a dozen of the schools visited had suitable materials for the teaching of elementary science. Very few teachers take up agricultural chemistry as part of the work; many are prevented by want of apparatus. This difficulty could be overcome. Mr. J. Grey, of Auckland, has made up complete sets of apparatus and chemicals to illustrate Johnson's Catechism of Agricultural Chemistry, at a total cost not exceeding £3 10s. a set. Could not country Committees, where the teachers desire to take up this subject, obtain the Board's sanction to purchase sets out of the school funds?

I believe the Board makes a rule of advertising for applications when any of the higher positions become vacant: would it not be well to adopt this method in the case of all positions worth more than £100 per annum? I believe that if this suggestion were adopted the Board would