

It is interesting to notice the fewness of pupils absent from examination—viz., thirty-two out of 1,091 examined in standards. Some of these were absent through illness, some from a desire on the part of parents that they should remain for another year in the same standard, whilst a few had lately come from other districts, where they had already passed their standard examination for the year. In the country districts, even in the exceptionally wet weather experienced during the time these schools were being examined, it was a rare occurrence to find a single child absent. I cannot help feeling that such a state of things reflects credit on the teachers, and also shows an excellent desire on the part of the children to pass the examination for promotion to a higher class.

Coming to the subjects taught in our schools, I propose offering a few remarks on those needing more special attention.

I cannot record any great improvement in reading. In many cases the reading is fluent, it is accurate, and enunciation is well cared for, but the expression which one naturally expects is altogether lacking. It is hard to conceive how it can be otherwise with but one book to work from, which is practically known by rote from beginning to end by the expiration of the first quarter of the year. In many educational districts the reading of two books annually is prescribed, and in Great Britain the reading of three books is held to be necessary. I fear our own district is sadly in arrears with reference to the production of really intelligent reading, and I would again direct your attention to my remarks made under this heading in last year's annual report. The comprehension of the subject-matter of the reading-lesson is generally very satisfactory; it would be well if the subject-matter of the poem selected for recitation were treated in a similar manner in this respect. I have occasionally noticed that even in schools where the recitation was well done, questions relating to the language of the poem were somewhat blankly received by the pupils.

Except in one or two cases I was thoroughly satisfied with the spelling and dictation throughout the district. The tests imposed were on the lines indicated in last year's report, and these will be again employed in the future. I am pleased to notice that errors in the spelling of simple words in other written work are of less frequent occurrence. All teachers should keep lists of misspelt words and use them occasionally by way of revision.

In arithmetic very satisfactory progress continues to be made, both in oral and written work. The tests for this subject are still set by the Education Department, and, with the exception of a few cards issued for Standard VI., presented no special difficulty. On the other hand, those issued for Standard III. were easier than those set down for the same standard in previous years.

Freehand and geometrical drawing are generally satisfactory. Scale drawing is very popular with our children, and very well done; whilst model drawing is not much attempted in the district. Drawing is taught most successfully where blank drawing-books only are used. A great many of our schools presented pupils for the first-grade examination conducted by the Wellington Technical School, the candidates meeting with great success. This examination has now become quite an annual institution, the children showing a keen desire to obtain a certificate.

Writing does not improve as it should. I am afraid this is due in a great measure to the fact that teachers do not take sufficient care to train pupils to sit in a good position and to hold pens properly. These are the more important points to be attended to, and I have frequently sought to impress them on the minds of teachers.

Geography continues to show improvement. In a few schools it is intelligently taught; not so, however, in the larger portion, where scanty information indifferently expressed is the chief fault. I am pleased to note that in only one school did I receive the matter asked for in tabulated form. Too little attention is devoted towards having all answers, either oral or written, given in complete sentences. Were this done generally it would prove most beneficial to this subject, and also to composition. As a rule maps are rather neatly drawn in most schools.

Composition and grammar seem to go hand in hand; at the same time they were not examined together, the former belonging to the pass and the latter to the class subjects. The correction of easy sentences was very fairly done, but paraphrasing was rather weak. In grammar, owing to the prevailing epidemic, I did not deem it advisable to impose a test fully up to requirements. The work done, however, showed the subject was receiving a fair share of attention.

The science selected for the year was ambulance-work, and this branch was for the most part taken up by the higher standards in all schools. The subject was well treated, the pupils displaying a great deal of enthusiasm in the practical work.

Needlework has now been placed on a more satisfactory footing, specimens of the required work being accepted instead of whole garments. More time can now be devoted to the actual teaching of sewing, and results are improving in consequence. It having been brought under my notice that certain girls absent themselves regularly on sewing afternoons, I shall in future, in all cases where the required amount of sewing is not produced, make no concession whatever in the arithmetic test.

Some attention is given to drill in all schools where a male teacher is employed, but owing to bad weather at examination time it had in most cases to be abandoned. At the Cobden School the boys did excellent work in their physical drill, and I should like to see more of it in the district. The boys at the Grey District High School are being drilled by the Government drill-instructor.

*Grey District High School.*—Secondary class: This class, which has a roll-number of nineteen, was examined in October. Fifteen pupils were present, two were absent owing to sickness, and one owing to another examination taking her attention. Results of the examination have been laid before you, which show the work to have been of a highly satisfactory character.