

The following summary shows the numbers, classes, and average ages of the pupils in attendance:—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.
Standard VII	467	453	Yrs. mos. 14 11
" VI	1,307	1,279	13 9
" V	1,737	1,700	12 11
" IV	2,012	1,973	12 0
" III	2,148	2,094	11 0
" II	1,969	1,917	9 11
" I	2,034	1,994	8 10
Preparatory	5,742	5,495	7 0
Add for 9 Catholic schools	17,416 1,313	16,905 1,245	11 3*
Totals	18,729	18,150	...

* Mean of average age.

As compared with last year there is an increase in the total roll-number of 480, for which S1 and P. classes are mainly responsible, as in S5, S6, and S7 there is a decided decrease. To show the rate of increase in the roll-numbers we append the totals for the past nine years:—

Year.	Total Roll-number.	Year.	Total Roll-number.
1900	15,211	1905	16,505
1901	15,241	1906	16,809
1902	15,258	1907	16,936
1903	15,787	1908	17,416
1904	16,093		

A less gratifying feature of our statistics is the fact that the number of pupils in S6 continues to decrease, as the following table will show:—

Year.	S6.
1906	1,386
1907	1,379
1908	1,307

This means that, notwithstanding the increased facilities for receiving secondary education (on which the Dominion now spends some £100,000 a year), a rapidly decreasing number of children, so far as this district is concerned, is availing itself of the benefits thus provided. We are strongly of opinion that, whatever views may be held with respect to the value of secondary education for the ordinary youth, it is a shortsighted policy to deprive our scholars of what should be the most valuable year of their primary-school life—the most valuable whatever walk in life the pupil is intended for. We strongly suspect this decrease in numbers in S6 is mainly due to the number of parents who are taking advantage of the exemption clause in the Education Act, allowing them to remove their children from the public schools after passing S5. The only remedy we can suggest is to make S6 the exemption standard, as recommended by the last Inspector's Conference (1907).

EFFICIENCY.—Each school has been reported on in detail to the Board, and the programmes of work and methods of teaching have been discussed at our visits, and at several conferences held with the teachers. In the matter of efficiency we have classified our schools as follows:—

Satisfactory to good	128
Fair	23
Inferior	10

161

The great bulk of the schools in the "inferior" list belong to Grade 0. These are mostly aided schools, in charge of uncertificated teachers, who, from the very nature of their circumstances, have few opportunities for self-improvement. The changes in the management of these schools are, moreover, disastrously frequent, owing to the low salaries and the general discomfort inseparable from living in isolated districts.

There have come under our notice during the year cases of irregularity in school hours, and of the closing of schools on days not regular holidays. We would point out that, apart altogether from this breach of definite regulations, these lapses must militate seriously against the discipline of the school, and are a just cause for irritation on the part of parents.

EXAMINATION AND INSPECTION.—New regulations for the examination and inspection of schools direct that the classification of all children attending the public schools in the Dominion shall, as a general rule, be made at the beginning of each year on the results of an examination