

Teachers.—In the quality of young persons offering themselves for employment as pupil-teachers and probationers at the beginning of the year 1916 there was a very perceptible improvement, while the numerical disparity in the sex of those appointed was much less than before. Our experience leads us more and more to esteem physique and personality as against mere scholarship. For anaemic, diffident, painfully self-conscious candidates, for book-worms and educational trophy-hunters pure and simple, there is no room in the teaching profession. Our teachers must have both physical and mental vigor, plenty of initiative, and abundant readiness and enthusiasm for the strenuous life they have chosen. It cannot be denied that the increasing frequency of changes in the teaching staff is having a decidedly adverse effect on the quality of the instruction and on general educational progress in this district. Moreover, the cumulative effect of inefficient instruction by untrained, partially qualified teachers, a class that has for years filled a large percentage of the positions in the Board's service, is beginning to leave its mark on primary education. The number of uncertificated teachers in the service shows no prospect of diminution, and the gravity of the situation has been accentuated by the withdrawal of some of our most promising male teachers who have gone to the war. While a fair proportion of "war-time appointments" will doubtless turn out satisfactorily in the end, full efficiency in these cases will not be attained for some years, and in estimating the ultimate effect on the education system of such appointments allowance must be made for the inevitable failure of a very considerable proportion to "make good."

Proficiency Examinations.—The proficiency examinations were held at twenty-seven centres (four less than last year) during the months of November and December, and at seventy-seven schools in remote districts (including Lakes District) on the occasion of the Inspector's visit during September, October, or November. Thus the pupils of 104 schools were examined for proficiency certificates at their own schools, and proficiency candidates from the remaining seventy-seven schools were required to travel to the nearest centre to be examined. The following table shows the results in the public schools compared with those of 1915 :—

Year.	Number of Candidates.	Proficiency Certificates.		Competency Certificates.		Failed.	
		Number.	Per Cent.	Number.	Per Cent.	Number.	Per Cent.
1915	792	586	74.0	127	16.0	79	10.0
1916	756	520	68.8	118	15.6	118	15.6

The increased percentage of absolute failures may in part be reasonably attributed to the higher percentage of marks now required for a competency certificate and to exceptional circumstances that affected some of the larger schools, while the lower percentage of proficiency certificates gained may be attributed to the circumstances mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

Organization.—The practice of making tentative promotion of pupils on the understanding that such promotion is to be reviewed, and if necessary reversed, at the end of the first term has grown to the dimensions of an evil. In most cases of that kind it is safe to anticipate that the promotion will not prove justifiable at the end of the term; the teacher will nevertheless be strongly tempted to avoid friction by retaining the pupil concerned in a class for which he is not fit. Another somewhat common instance of weakness in classification is the practice of granting promotion in English whilst withholding it in arithmetic. Although the dual classification of a pupil is permitted by the regulations, its frequent adoption is deprecated as tending to undue complexity. Dual classification should be adopted only as an exceptional and temporary expedient: the earliest opportunity should be taken of unifying the classification of the exceptional pupil. After all, the very general adoption of the expedient of grouping classes for instruction in English should make it unnecessary to classify the average pupil differently in different subjects. In general it may be said that no good end is served by classifying a pupil in a higher standard in English than in arithmetic, unless there is a probability that such pupil's standard of attainment in arithmetic will within the year be brought level with his standard of attainment in English. We are convinced that a considerable number of the brighter pupils in the preparatory classes might be advanced to S1 more rapidly than is done. The average age of the pupils entering S1 in 1917 is seven years and ten months. While the average for the district is not unsatisfactory, the average for some schools is too high. The attention of teachers is directed to the following passage in the regulations: "In the preparatory division, especially where it contains three or more classes, it will generally be necessary to make promotions of pupils at other times besides the beginning of the year." It is in the preparatory division that a pupil falls into the class group that will in the ordinary course of events accompany him throughout his school life; and in the interests of the brighter pupils, if any individual in that division is found to be distinctly superior in ability to the group in which he is placed when enrolled he should be promptly promoted to the next higher group.

Registers and Records.—Very few cases have been reported of neglect in regard to the marking and the entering-up of registers. In a good many schools, however, this necessary work might be made less onerous if it were made more systematic. The entries in the daily, weekly, and admission registers should be brought up to date once a week—say, as the last duty to be performed on Friday—and head teachers should distribute the work amongst their assistants. A good many irregularities were found in the examination registers; the scale of marks for the different subjects was more frequently at variance with than in accordance with the regulations;