

TABLE D.

Classes.			Reading.		Dictation and Spelling.		Writing.		Arithmetic.		Grammar and Com- position.		Geography.		Drawing.	
			Number examined.	Per Cent. passed.	Number examined.	Per Cent. passed.	Number examined.	Per Cent. passed.	Number examined.	Per Cent. passed.	Number examined.	Per Cent. passed.	Number examined.	Per Cent. passed.	Number examined.	Per Cent. passed.
Standard VI.	...		167	95.8	167	95.8	167	98.2	167	77.2	167	59.2	167	79.0	...	...
" V.	...		389	90.4	389	70.4	389	96.9	389	76.0	389	67.0	389	72.7	389	93.0
" IV.	...		754	87.9	754	71.6	754	95.7	754	66.9	754	63.2	...	...	754	88.3
" III.	...		1,081	85.7	1,081	78.2	1,081	96.7	1,081	78.4	1,081	72.0	1,081	83.0	1,081	96.2
" II.	...		1,050	89.5	1,050	82.6	1,050	98.2	1,050	83.2	...	...	...	...	1,050	96.0
" I.	...		1,002	83.0	1,002	87.6	1,002	95.7	1,002	87.4	...	...	...	...	1,002	95.8
Totals ...	{	1890	4,443	87.2	4,443	80.2	4,443	96.7	4,443	79.4	2,391	67.6	1,637	80.2	4,276	94.4
		1889	4,211	84.7	4,211	77.3	4,211	94.4	4,211	74.0	2,180	64.0	1,526	74.1	3,723	89.3

INSTRUCTION.—In each of my annual reports during the past six years I wrote so fully under this heading that I do not purpose to say much this year. The foregoing table plainly shows that the majority of teachers have worked well, and that steady progress is being made. I shall, accordingly, merely make a few remarks upon the quality of the work in each standard, noting especially any generally common weaknesses.

Reading slowly improves, but I consider it should have been much better in Standard I., where the percentage of passes was lowest—83. The attainments in reading in this standard were varied to a most extraordinary degree at different schools, and perhaps nothing gave me more pleasure and nothing more annoyance than listening to this subject in this class. Thus, at some schools I found pupils quite unable to read words continuously in Nelson's small little book—a book not nearly sufficiently advanced for the class; while at others, some of which were small schools with one teacher in charge, very young Standard I. pupils read an advanced Standard II. book with the greatest ease and with perfect inflection. In Standard III. and Standard IV. too many pupils found great difficulty with the ordinary words of the text, and seldom did I find what was read comprehended. In Standard V. and Standard VI. improvement was shown, but at some schools so helplessly did the pupils flounder through reading-lessons which they had not lately seen, that—I am sorry to have to say it—I must come to the following conclusion: Few pupils would pass in reading if they were examined in matter quite new to them. Style and expression varied very much at different schools. In the teaching of reading in the preparatory classes the blackboard might be used more freely.

Spelling, considering the little difficulty the teaching of it as compared with other subjects should entail, is the weakest subject in this district. The percentages in Standard IV. and Standard V. are particularly low—71.6 and 70.4 respectively. There was, however, improvement shown for the year in every class except Standard V. (3.1 lower), but especially in Standard VI. (9.3 higher) and in Standard III. (8.3 higher). Some teachers might remember that "concert exercises" in spelling are liable to degenerate into a mere unconscious utterance of words. Spelling is a matter for the visual memory and for transcription, not for oral recitation. Pictures, so to speak, of words need to be seen and recognised, and time is terribly wasted by the mere utterance of letters that compose them. In the face of this, I was sometimes told that pupils would have spelled better if they had been examined orally, instead of having been required to write the words; but I ask, do not teachers, in oral spelling, prompt, perhaps unconsciously, their pupils, besides frequently allowing them two or more attempts? Again, surely the pupils of any properly-trained class should find it easier to give written answers than oral answers; for in the former they have plenty of time and can supervise and correct, and also there is no ground for nervousness as I allow the teachers themselves to dictate the words. Yet again, ability to spell is necessary in written work only. With regard to the dictation in Standard III. to Standard VI. inclusive, every year it is forcibly impressed upon me that, though the passages are read over several times, at comparatively few schools do the pupils, when supervising their work, see and correct silly misspellings and omissions. At the worst schools the passages were sometimes unreadable—a feature that tells of an utter absence of training. But training is the object of true education, knowledge is secondary; and observation, or, in other words, intelligent work, is the be-all and the end-all of teaching and training.

Writing: Recognising the importance of good writing, I have always been very particular with this subject, and I am pleased to be able to state again this year that writing throughout the district is on the whole very good indeed. The percentage of passes for all standards taken together is 96.7, in each standard it is over 95, and both in Standard VI. and in Standard II. it reaches 98.2. In Standard II. at the majority of schools transcription on slates in particular was exceedingly good, while at several schools some very fine transcription on foolscap (not in the requirements of this standard) also was shown. Such a percentage in Standard II. must be considered wonderfully high. The examination papers of Standard III. and the higher standards inclusive generally were characterized by extreme neatness and nice arrangement.