

The class-subjects include grammar, history, science, and object-lessons in all classes, and geography in Standard II. The results in these are classed as "good" in 15 schools, "satisfactory" in 101, "fair" in 166, "moderate" in 42, and "inferior" in 1.

In the additional subjects the results were "very good" in 2 schools, "good" in 23, "satisfactory" in 133, "fair" in 143, and "moderate" in 24. In one school there were no standard classes, and at another, which had been open only for a few months, no attention had been paid to the class and additional subjects, and no valuation of them was made.

On the whole there has been some improvement in the class-subjects, and some falling-off in the additional subjects, as compared with last year's estimates of their efficiency.

As compared with those for last year, the ages at which the standards have been passed are somewhat lower in Standards VI., V., IV., and I.; in Standard II. the age is a month higher.

The number of pupils over eight years of age who were not presented for Standard I. was 1,960, as against 1,754 last year, when the percentage of such pupils was lower than in recent years.

A wider acquaintance with the Board's schools has satisfied me that they are in some respects more efficiently taught and better managed than I supposed when I wrote down my impressions in last year's report. It is due to the public, and above all to the teachers, that I should state this in plain terms; and it gives me pleasure to be able to qualify the somewhat unfavourable judgment for which the limited evidence then before me afforded abundant warrant. A fair number of the smallest schools—schools taught by a single teacher—are taught and managed as well as we can expect; and a large proportion of the class of schools that rank next in point of size—schools with a staff of from two to five teachers—are well managed and efficiently taught. As a class the largest schools stand somewhat below those of intermediate size, both in teaching and in management. This inferiority is mainly due to crowded rooms, to frequent changes of teachers, and to the difficulties that arise from an organization that compels two or more teachers to work together in one large room. These difficulties can be lessened only by exercising great care in choosing teachers of proved governing capacity for all classes that are taught in such unfavourable circumstances.

The weakest point in our schools is undoubtedly the management and teaching of the preparatory classes—the classes below Standard I. In these the progress in reading and arithmetic is seldom satisfactory, while the training in habits of attention and steady application leaves much to be desired. In many small schools these lower classes seem to me to be positively neglected, and it is no unusual thing to find the pupils about to be promoted into the Standard I. class quite unfit for that stage. I have had to report this over and over again in connection with the standard examinations. In many schools only a single reading-lesson a day is given to the preparatory classes. In such cases most of the morning and the whole of the afternoon are devoted to slate exercises (writing, ciphering, or drawing), except when an object-lesson comes in to relieve the monotony of the routine. The training in reading that can be given under such circumstances is most inadequate, and the progress necessarily slow. Two reading-lessons a day at least should be given to all such classes, and no time-table can be approved that does not make provision for this. Progress is retarded in other ways also, chiefly by the unwieldy size of the classes, especially in the larger schools, and the difficulty of securing really effective supervision of the pupils, seated, as most of them are, far from the teacher, and spread uniformly over a large area of the room. The advantages of concentrating the pupils of junior classes as far as practicable, and of teaching them in smaller divisions, have been pretty generally recognised, but more thorough attention to these arrangements would even further improve the teaching and the control of such classes.

The inadequate training of the primer classes in reading is, however, due in no small measure to the very limited amount of reading-matter contained in the primers and "Infant Reader" in use for some years past. The substitution of the "Queen" primers and "Infant Reader" for these meagre books will, I trust, do much to secure improvement. But more than this is needed. Before pupils are advanced into the Standard I. class they should have read the whole or the greater part of the No. 1 "Royal Reader." They will then be able to enter on the reading required for the successive standards with every prospect of doing it easily and pleasantly.

The defects in the teaching of arithmetic in the preparatory and lower-standard classes have been so serious that they cannot be cured in a year. Still, a good deal has already been done to put this part of the work on a better and sounder footing, though much remains to be accomplished. An attempt has been made in a majority of the schools to teach addition on some approved system, and in a considerable number of cases very satisfactory progress has been made. Elsewhere, partly from attempting too much in a short time, partly from the want of a clear apprehension of what to aim at, and partly from the thralldom which familiar ways of working exercise over us all, less has been done than I had expected. The mistake of attempting to teach addition and multiplication at the same time has been continued in a good many schools, to the detriment of progress. From the experience of the year I have come to the conclusion that minute and specific directions as to the treatment of arithmetic in the lowest classes would be helpful to many teachers, and I have prepared and submitted to the Board such directions on this and some other matters as seemed desirable.

The practice of massing three or four divisions of primer pupils for instruction in tables and counting is still too prevalent. It is just as necessary to teach these classes separately in tables and counting as in reading.

In most schools greater attention has been given to English, while somewhat less stress is laid on arithmetic, which still receives a liberal share of time and attention. Thanks to the praiseworthy exertions of head teachers, two reading-books are now used in all the standard classes of the great majority of the schools, and I expect that this practice will soon be universal. My colleagues all agree in thinking that reading has improved considerably since the course of lessons has been more extensive. In the upper classes of the great majority of the schools the ordinary reading-