

These totals show an advance on the totals for the previous year of 412 on the roll, and of 372 present at the Inspector's annual visit. Though there is an increase in the total number of children in the district who are receiving instruction, there is a shrinkage in the numbers of Standard VII, Standard II, and the preparatory classes. For 1904 the roll-numbers in these classes were 696, 2,076, and 5,108 respectively, and for 1905, 513, 2,016, and 5,091. The falling-off of the numbers in Standard VII is satisfactorily accounted for by the opening in the city of the technical classes, which are recruited mainly from passed Standard VI pupils.

For the Catholic schools the totals were—1,255 on the roll, and 1,168 present at the annual visit. For 1904 the corresponding numbers were 1,266 and 1,219—a decrease for 1905 of eleven on the roll, and of fifty-one present at the annual visit.

The following table shows the improvement since 1903 in the average attendance for the whole district :—

				Average Roll.	Average Attendance.	Percentage.
1903	..	..	..	.. 15,496	12,801	82·6
1904	..	..	..	.. 15,886	13,462	84·7
1905	..	..	..	.. 16,235	14,071	86·6

or an increase of 4 per cent. in the average attendance since the appointment of a Truant Inspector, some eighteen months ago.

ACCOMMODATION.—With regard to school accommodation generally, a slow but steady improvement is taking place every year, though in some of our oldest school buildings great difficulty is experienced in organizing the classes on a satisfactory basis under the present system of staffing, as the scale regulating the staffs of public schools is a rigid one, determined solely by the average attendance. It is therefore the same for a modern structure specially built to meet the provisions of the scale as it is for an old building antiquated in design and altogether unsuited to modern requirements.

Taking the district as a whole, progress in educational matters continues to be of a satisfactory nature. As a body, our teachers are imbued with a high and proper sense of responsibility, and are earnest in their efforts to discharge their duty towards the children committed to their care. The 150 schools examined during the year we have classified as follows : “Satisfactory to good,” 119 ; “fair,” 20 ; “inferior,” 11. Changes of teachers have been made in the cases of seven of the eleven schools classified as inferior. The majority of these schools are in Grade O, and, as we have pointed out in previous reports, the salaries are so small that the greatest difficulty is experienced in finding qualified and suitable teachers to undertake their management. In several instances schools of this class, owing to lack of teachers, have remained closed for two and three months at a time.

SYLLABUS AND GENERAL.—Matters of the syllabus connected with ordinary school methods have already been discussed with the teachers personally. We shall here confine ourselves, therefore, to remarks of a general nature. In the English subjects we find reading, on the whole, satisfactory, as far as fluency and expression are concerned, but faults in pronunciation and enunciation are still too prevalent, and, in some localities, reprehensibly so. We have never been slow to recognise and appreciate the numerous difficulties with which the teacher has to contend in the performance of his arduous duties, but in this matter of pronunciation we are disinclined to accept excuses. Cases have come under our observation where the evil has been remedied by a few minutes' drill a day in a selected list of words in which errors in the pronunciation of the vowel-sounds and omissions of final “d,” “t,” or “g” most frequently occur. The singing lesson can also be made a means of correcting these faults, as they are rarely noticeable in classes in which voice-cultivation and ear-training regularly form portion of the singing-lesson. During the coming year we hope to see in the majority of our schools the work of some standard author in use as a second Reader. For the upper classes excellent selections can be made from any of the ordinary school editions of English classics, and for Standards IV and III we have recommended works such as Kingsley's “Water Babies,” and Carroll's “Alice in Wonderland,” as being suitable. Spelling, as tested from dictation of newspaper matter, or from the reading-book in use, is generally good, and rarely marked lower than satisfactory. Distinctly improved work in both composition and spelling has resulted from a systematic course of work, as laid down in “Wood's “Word-building and Composition,” or in Arnold's “Language Lessons.”

The results in composition, judged by the essays on set subjects, are very creditable, and in schools in which nature-study and observation-lessons form prominent features of the teacher's scheme of work, some really excellent and original composition is done. Essays, however, in some schools are apt to become purely descriptive of something seen or a mere relating of a string of facts already committed to memory by the pupil for the express purpose of essay-writing, and we have found children trained on these lines to make a very poor attempt at a letter in which they are required to answer an advertisement or to give information on some business matter. The exercises in composition issued by the Department were used for the first time throughout the whole district, and with only moderate results so far as the upper standards were concerned. There is quite a mistaken idea in some quarters that, because formal or technical grammar has practically disappeared from the syllabus, nothing has taken its place. As a means of teaching composition, we have done—and we hope for ever—with the complicated analysis, the intricate parsing, the perplexing and exasperating classifications and definitions of the old grammar text-books, but it is only to make room for a saner and more rational system. But some teachers appear to be in a fog as to what the new requirements with regard to grammar are, though the directions on the syllabus are surely clear enough : “No grammar is to be introduced into the course of primary-school instruction beyond that required for the purpose of training children in the correct and ready use of their mother tongue.” Copious examples illustrating the methods to be employed in order to achieve this result are given for each standard, and any teacher who is training his children in the knowledge of the functions of words, their relations to each other in a sentence, and their correct use, is meeting all the requirements of the syllabus with regard to grammar. There are teachers who think that this cannot be done without having recourse to the abstruse terminology