

teachers and children were present who ought to have been in bed. In connection with this matter of sickness I have to point out that there has been an unprecedented number of teachers absent this year on sick-leave. This fact has a very important financial aspect; and if the applications for sick-leave are as numerous in the coming year as they have been in the year just closed it will probably be necessary for the Board to revise their regulations on the subject.

In estimating the quality of the work done in the compulsory subjects in the public schools, 1 school has been classified as excellent, 19 as good, 2 as satisfactory, 9 as fair, and 1 as inferior. In the additional subjects, 19 schools are classified as good, 1 as satisfactory, 10 as fair, and 2 as inferior. In respect to general efficiency 20 are classified as good, 5 as satisfactory, and 7 as fair.

The following is a summary of the examination statistics of the public schools for the year :—

Classes.						Number on Roll.	Present at Inspector's Annual Visit.	Ave age Age of Pupils in each Class.
								Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	...	16	16	14 3
" VI	...	...	...	...	...	135	131	13 11
" V	...	...	...	...	...	145	136	12 11
" IV	...	...	...	...	...	175	169	11 8
" III	...	...	...	...	...	190	180	11 3
" II	...	...	...	...	...	185	182	9 8
" I	...	...	...	...	...	187	180	9 0
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	...	692	564	7 0
Totals	...	...	...	...	...	1,725	1,558	11 2*

* Mean of average age.

These figures show an increase over last year on the number of children on the roll, but they show also a greater proportion of absentees from examination. This is accounted for by the fact—already adverted to—that epidemics of influenza and measles prevailed during the period of examination, a hundred young children being absent in one school alone from this cause.

On the whole the schools of the district, in spite of many drawbacks, have maintained a very satisfactory level of efficiency during the year, and the various subjects of the syllabus have been treated with intelligence, thoroughness, and skill. The most notable exception to this statement occurs in connection with the subject of composition. In most of the schools—and especially in the larger ones—the essays were well done; but the tests in analysis and synthesis of sentences were altogether too much for the majority of the Standard VII pupils. The ingenuity and ability displayed by some of them in combining sentences so as to form sense of some sort, while they did not so much as understand the instructions given them, were to me a striking proof of the native intelligence of the young Dominionite. The sentences so framed, however, did not comply with the conditions imposed in the question, the failure arising from the lack of a good broad foundation knowledge of analysis and grammar. While it is doubtless true that the excessive attention given in former days to the niceties of English grammar was to a very large extent a waste of time, a knowledge of the chief rules of syntax and of sufficient grammar to be able to understand and apply these rules is still absolutely essential to the intelligent and successful teaching of composition.

Weakness in arithmetic was answerable for a majority of the failures in Standard VI, this weakness being due to the fact that teachers have concentrated their attention exclusively on method and have ignored the fact that accuracy also is a matter of prime importance. Although marks were in all cases allowed for correct methods of working, it seems to me that there never was a time when accuracy in arithmetic was so desirable and necessary as at the present day. In the merchant's office or in the various departments of the Civil Service it is accuracy that is demanded, and inaccurate work is worse than useless. Sixth Standard pupils a quarter of a century ago would have laughed at the present Sixth Standard tests.

Reading is good in only a few schools, the fact being that in most cases this important subject is now being robbed of its fair share of attention and time. The necessary result of this neglect is slovenly, slipshod reading, with an almost entire absence of fluency and intelligent expression. A habit of dropping the aspirate in such words as "why," "when," "where," &c., is also becoming disagreeably prevalent. It should only be necessary to draw attention to this blemish to insure its being speedily eradicated.

The teachers' Saturday drawing class has had the effect of greatly improving the drawing in many schools. The correlation of free-arm drawing and brushwork with nature-study has acted and reacted most beneficially, giving an added interest to each of these subjects.

Physical drill is taken in all schools, and the movements are in most cases executed with ready confidence and precision. These exercises are most popular with the pupils when performed to music, and I was pleased to see that some schools had adopted the practice of marching in to music. This has much to commend it. In some schools children are taught to walk in on their toes when entering or passing through the rooms of the school. In my judgment this is both unnecessary and undesirable. A child can walk softly and yet in a graceful and natural manner; but to train a child from the infant gallery to the Sixth Standard to walk in this crouching, hobbling, unnatural manner cannot be conducive to a manly bearing or to an easy and elegant gait in walking.