

*Certificates.*—Candidates for certificates of proficiency were examined, if they so desired, on the occasion of my annual visits of inspection, and a central examination was held at about the middle of December. About 55 per cent. were awarded certificates of proficiency, and about 24 per cent. gained only the competency certificates. For 1913 the figures were 60 and 15 per cent. respectively. In the Roman Catholic schools the percentages were 66 and 21 respectively, as against 59 and 26 for 1913. In this connection I would again refer to the comment made in my last annual report—namely, that the promotion from Standard V to Standard VI is evidently too easy. In some cases it is found that the fifth class is promoted practically *en masse*, and if the head teacher, with his intimate knowledge of the capabilities of each pupil, sees fit to make such a wholesale advancement, it is only natural that the Inspector should expect to see a very high percentage of proficiency certificates gained by the same class in the following year. This expectation, however, is seldom realized; indeed, from the nature of the papers presented by pupils of the higher class, it is quite evident that a considerable number of candidates would have been much better employed for at least another year in securing a more thorough grounding in the work of the lower class.

*Schemes of Work.*—As the new syllabus of instruction was not ready until schools had commenced the year's work teachers were advised to continue with the schemes in use, and to introduce new features and arrangements gradually. In practically every case a satisfactory attempt was made to incorporate the new with the old, and it is expected that no difficulty will be experienced in carrying on during the present year strictly in accordance with the regulations now in force.

*Reading.*—The reading of the higher classes showed a marked advance on that of previous years. Fluency and expression have considerably improved, and comprehension was very satisfactory. I cannot report so favourably, however, on the reading of the younger pupils. There is need for more practice, a wider range of reading-matter, and a thorough drilling in the use of consonants and in phrasing. Some improvement may be looked for when the arrangements for continuous readers are placed on a more satisfactory basis. In a few schools there were pupils that did not possess even the miscellaneous reader in use. Recitation was, on the whole, satisfactory, but the passages selected were often very poor stuff, and, in too many instances, but very indifferently memorized. I was glad to find that in some of the better schools prose selections were taken up, and that they were very well treated.

*Composition.*—In this subject a considerable advance is to be recorded, but much yet remains to be done before a satisfactory report can be given. On the whole the younger children do very well, both in oral and in written work, possibly because in their composition exercises they are not expected to go beyond the simple sentence. So far as the older pupils are concerned it would appear that in writing an essay or a letter the whole of their attention is fixed on setting down what they may happen to know of the facts regarding the particular subject in hand, forgetting that what the examiner is mainly interested in is the manner in which this setting-down is done. In the greater number of cases the composition, *per se*, is quite lost sight of, and there is seldom any evidence that the work when finished has been subjected to what even the best writers find necessary—namely, revision and correction. Although more definite work in grammatical exercises is now required, this branch, for the year under review, seems to have received even less satisfactory treatment than hitherto. This was particularly noticeable in the exercises set in analysis, synthesis, and correction of errors. As pointed out in my report for 1913, the grammatical exercises still appear to be kept quite distinct from those in composition, to the detriment of both. Much better results would be obtained if the pupils' own essays were used as matter on which to base the exercises in grammar.

*Writing.*—Not much improvement can be recorded in this subject, though in the schools that had previously been favourably reported upon there was a further advance in efficiency. In a large proportion of schools the copybook work is still distinctly bad, and one must conclude that in these the teachers set a very low standard, or altogether neglect the work so far as instruction and proper supervision are concerned.

*Spelling.*—The stereotyped mode of testing—namely, by dictating a connected passage and a list of words—together with exercises in the use of homonyms, was continued. It was found that, in general, the spelling of the harder words was well done, but that the more common words proved the greater stumbling-block. In this respect the spelling was very weak, a fact that points rather to a lack of thorough inspection and revisal of ordinary written work, such as essay-writing, than to want of attention in the preparation of the usual spelling-exercises. It is safe to say that if marks for spelling had been awarded on the essay-writing a very large percentage of the pupils would have failed. This, of course, applies to the work of pupils in the senior division. The spelling of the younger scholars was usually very good.

*Arithmetic.*—I have again to report that the arithmetic of all classes up to and including Standard IV was good, but that in the two higher classes it was very weak. Poor work in arithmetic was again the main reason for the many failures to gain the certificate of proficiency. It seems quite clear that much more practice in oral arithmetic is needed. There is a tendency to look at a problem superficially, and then to attempt the solution in a certain set form. Thus, the three dimensions of a box being given and the superficial area being required, it is quite common to find the three dimensions multiplied together. Additional indication of the need for more systematic practice in oral work was afforded by the results of the tests in mental arithmetic. Though the problems were so framed as merely to test the pupils' knowledge of principles, and were so simple as to leave little room for error in calculation, yet the work was, with very few exceptions, very unsatisfactory.

*Drawing.*—Prior to 1914 very little colour-work had been done in the schools of this district, and it would therefore have been unwise to attempt to fulfil the requirements of the new syllabus in their entirety. It was accordingly intimated that, in the meantime, work in coloured chalks