

the various districts, although it was not quite so marked in 1916 as in previous years. The lowest figure relating to proficiency certificates was 51 per cent., and the highest 76 per cent. The number of competency certificates ranged from 9 per cent. to 23 per cent. In the year 1915 the proficiency certificates granted ranged from 52 per cent. to 80 per cent., and the competency certificates from 9 per cent. to 27 per cent. When the two classes of certificates are taken together there is still a range difference of 23 per cent. This variation in the results from different districts of the Dominion must to some extent be accounted for by the different standards of merit demanded by the various Inspectors. There appears to be some evidence, however, of a variation in the standards of merit attained in the schools in different localities. The results of the departmental examinations tend to bear out this contention, since the comparative results from the various districts in the proficiency examinations and in the Junior National Scholarship and junior free place examinations roughly correspond.

### REGISTERED PRIMARY PRIVATE SCHOOLS.

(E-2, Tables D1 and D2.)

The number of private primary schools (excluding private schools for Natives referred to elsewhere) registered in 1916 was 197, of which a small number had closed before the end of the year. Annual returns were received from 186 schools, to which the figures given below relate. For the purpose of ensuring that children who do not attend public schools wherein the State is willing to provide for them are receiving adequate instruction elsewhere, private schools are inspected by the Department's Inspectors, upon the character of whose reports the registration largely depends. Pupils in S6 are also examined by the Inspectors for certificates of proficiency and competency. The following are the statistics relative to these schools:—

	1915.	1916.
Number of schools .. .. .	176	186
Roll number at end of year—Boys .. .. .	7,415	7,786
Girls .. .. .	8,866	9,474
	16,281	17,260
Average attendance .. .. .	14,366	15,199
		Number. Percentage.
Children under seven years of age .. .. .		3,344 19·4
Children from seven to ten years of age .. .. .		5,610 32·5
Children over ten years of age .. .. .		8,306 48·1
Children in preparatory classes .. .. .		5,681 32·9
Number of full-time teachers .. .. .	567	588
Average number of pupils per teacher .. .. .	25	26
S6 pupils presented for examination .. .. .	1,016	1,093
		Number. Percentage.
Proficiency certificates issued .. .. .	684	690 63·1
Competency certificates issued .. .. .	170	189 17·3

It will be observed that the classification of pupils according to ages differs very little from that of public schools, while the percentage of pupils in the preparatory classes is 32·9, as compared with 35·48 in public schools. The average number of pupils per teacher is 26, the corresponding number for all public schools being 32.

Tables D1 and D2 in E.-2 give particulars of the schools in the various education districts.

### CONVEYANCE OF SCHOLARS.

Free passes on the railway to the nearest public or private school are granted to children living near to the railway-line but out of reach of a primary school; and the same privilege is enjoyed by pupils having to travel to attend secondary schools, district high schools, and technical high schools, and also by free-place holders travelling to attend technical schools or classes other than technical high schools.