

## GENERAL EFFICIENCY.

We are pleased to be able to record that the general efficiency of the schools is distinctly good. The results of the Proficiency Examination indicate that a high standard of attainment is reached, while the teaching in the remaining standards is thorough and efficient. The staffing is steadily improving, partly owing to a gradual increase in the number of young enthusiastic teachers from the training colleges, and partly owing to a steady reduction in the number of uncertificated teachers. The teachers are, for the most part, thoroughly enthusiastic and conscientious, and the district is indeed fortunate in securing the services of such a fine body of men and women working zealously in the cause of education. Largely owing to the efforts of the organizing teachers, distinct improvement is apparent in the work of the smaller schools, the classification being sound, methods of instruction efficient, and the enthusiasm of teachers and scholars well maintained. Full use is made by the teachers of the sound reference library at the office, while many of them are keeping closely in touch with recent publications on educational thought and method.

## ORGANIZATION, ETC.

An investigation conducted by the Chief Inspector in the first half of the year showed that we had far too many classes of over sixty pupils. The evil has been partly remedied, and this year we expect the position to be much improved. Otherwise we found that, except in a few cases, the general organization and the distribution of the staffs were quite satisfactory. It is pleasing to find that a genuine attempt is now being made to secure more rapid promotion for the brighter pupils. With this end in view a number of teachers are trying to work the better pupils of one class along with those of the class above. This method works splendidly between Standards I and II, between Standards III and IV, and between Standards V and VI, and it is now quite a common thing to find pupils passing through two classes in one year.

## RETARDATION.

An investigation of the annual class lists for 1924 shows that the evil of retardation has not yet been eliminated from our schools. The reasons are no doubt similar to those that exist in other districts, chief amongst which are the distances that many of the pupils are from the school, and consequent high age of admission and subsequent irregular attendance. In the case of many schools we are not quite satisfied that the progress through the infant-room has been sufficiently rapid. This is borne out by the frequency with which head teachers in setting down the cause of retardation have said "Retarded in infant-room," or "Too long in infant-room." We note with pleasure, however, that in many cases the desire of the teachers to get the pupils through the infant department in two years is meeting with success. This is most pronounced in those schools where the teachers have spared no pains to provide plenty of apparatus for individual work, and are thus enabled to keep their pupils fully occupied at interesting and educative work throughout the day.

The following table, compiled from the annual class lists, shows the numbers of pupils over the age set down by the Department for each class, together with those who on the same standard may be regarded as "accelerates":—

—	S5.	S4.	S3.	S2.	S1.	P.	Total.
Standard age .. ..	13	12	11	10	9	8	
Roll number .. ..	1,462	1,752	2,017	2,108	2,241	5,023	14,603
Over age .. ..	838	976	1,041	987	885	889	5,616
Under standard age ..	137	139	202	243	264	..	985

It is instructive to note that of the 5,616 over-age pupils, 759 are retarded two years, 256 three years, 60 four years, and 7 five years; while of the 985 "accelerates," 1 was three years ahead, 8 two years ahead, and the remainder one year. The numbers for Standard VI show similar retardation, the number passing at over fourteen years of age being 625 out of 1,247, while only 133 were under thirteen.

## DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.

There are at present five district high schools in this district, and, judging from the attendance, we gather that they are supplying a real need, and that the residents of the district fully appreciate their value. Fortunately, they are controlled by headmasters who possess sound professional qualifications, and who are thus well able to supervise and direct the work of the assistants. These, in many cases, are young teachers doing efficient work. The programme of work meets the requirements of the rural course, and wherever possible use is made of the itinerant instructors in science to supplement the work of the regular staff. Sound judgment has been exercised in making recommendations for senior free places, the work of the pupils for consideration reaching a distinctly good standard. Something yet remains to be done to increase accommodation and supply further facilities for science-teaching in some of the centres.

## SUBJECTS OF INSTRUCTION.

The work in most subjects is sound, and teachers generally are coming to see that there is something to be said for at least a partial return to the older standards of neatness and accuracy, and that