

## EDUCATION

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### ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Though Iceland is thinly populated and schools few and far between in many of the rural districts, elementary education has been brought within the reach of even the poorest, and there is no grown-up person, male or female, but has learned to read and write, unless he (or she) is mentally defective. Under the Public Elementary Education Act of 1907 (revised in 1926) attendance at school was made compulsory on children between the ages of ten and fourteen, while parents and guardians are required to provide for the instruction of their children and wards up to that age; for, unless they are mentally defective, they must have acquired a certain amount of proficiency in reading and writing before they enter school. The local education authorities may on application be permitted to extend the compulsion to children between seven and ten years of age; and this has already been done in a number of districts.

All children are thus under a statutory obligation to attend school between the ages of ten and fourteen; but they do not, as a matter of fact, all receive their instruction at the elementary schools, for exemptions from attendance may be allowed, provided the arrangements made for their teaching are recognized as being satisfactory; and, besides, this act has never been rigorously enforced. The average attendance at the elementary schools is seven or eight children per hundred of population.

For purposes of elementary education the country is divided into school districts, the number of which is somewhat lower than that of the parishes (municipalities), though, as a rule, a parish (municipality) constitutes a school district.

Local elementary education is under the control of a board of education, consisting of five (or three) members, acting for a term of