Consolidated Fund, and be available in any manner in which such Fund is available.

Short title. 4. This Act may be cited as the Consolidated Fund (No. 1) Act, 1897.

CHAPTER 5.

An Act to provide for a Grant out of the Exchequer in Aid of Voluntary Elementary Schools, and for the Exemption from Rates of those Schools, and to repeal part of Section Nineteen of the Elementary Education Act, 1876. [8th April 1897.]

BE it enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Aid grant to voluntary elementary schools.

1.—(1.) For aiding voluntary schools there shall be annually paid out of moneys provided by Parliament an aid grant, not exceeding in the aggregate five shillings per scholar for the whole number of scholars in those schools.

(2.) The aid grant shall be distributed by the Education Department to such voluntary schools and in such manner and amounts, as the Department think best for the purpose of helping necessitous schools and increasing their efficiency, due regard being had to the maintenance of voluntary subscriptions.

(3.) If associations of schools are constituted in such manner in such areas and with such governing bodies representative of the managers as are approved by the Education Department, there shall be allotted to each association while so approved,

(*a*) a share of the aid grant to be computed according to the number of scholars in the schools of the association at the rate of five shillings per scholar, or, if the Department fix different rates for town and country schools respectively (which they are hereby empowered to do) then at those rates; and

(*b*) a corresponding share of any sum which may be available out of the aid grant after distribution has been made to unassociated schools.

(4.) The share so allotted to each such association shall be distributed as aforesaid by the Education Department after consulting the governing body of the association, and in accordance with any scheme prepared by that body which the Department for the time being approve.

(5.) The Education Department may exclude a school from any share of the aid grant which it might otherwise receive, if, in the opinion of the Department, it unreasonably refuses or fails to join

such an association, but the refusal or failure shall not be deemed unreasonable if the majority of the schools in the association belong to a religious denomination to which the school in question does not itself belong.

(6.) The Education Department may require, as a condition of a school receiving a share of the aid grant, that the accounts of the receipts and expenditure of the school shall be annually audited in accordance with the regulations of the Department.

(7.) The decision of the Education Department upon any question relating to the distribution or allotment of the aid grant, including the question whether an association is or is not in conformity with this Act, and whether a school is a town or a country school, shall be final.

Repeal of 17*s.* 6*d.* limit in 39 & 40 Vict. c. 79. s. 19, as respects day schools in England and Wales.

2. After the last day of March one thousand eight hundred and ninety-seven, the following words in section nineteen of the Elementary Education Act, 1876, namely, "such grant shall not in "any year be reduced by reason of its excess above the income of "the school if the grant do not exceed the amount of seventeen "shillings and sixpence per child in average attendance at the "school during that year, but shall not exceed that amount per "child, except by the same sum by which the income of the school "derived from voluntary contributions, rates, school fees, endow-"ments, or any source whatever other than the Parliamentary "grant, exceeds the said amount per child, and" shall be repealed so far as they apply to day schools in England and Wales.

Exemption from rates of voluntary elementary schools.

3. No person shall be assessed or rated to or for any local rate in respect of any land or buildings used exclusively or mainly for the purposes of the schoolrooms offices or playground of a voluntary school, except to the extent of any profit derived by the managers of the school from the letting thereof.

Definitions.

4. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires—

The expression "voluntary school" means a public elementary day school not provided by a school board:

Any reference to the number of scholars in schools means the number of scholars in average attendance as computed by the Education Department:

The expression "local rate" means a rate the proceeds of which are applicable to public local purposes, and which is leviable on the basis of an assessment in respect of the yearly value of property, and includes any sum which, though obtained in the first instance by a precept, certificate, or other instrument requiring payment from some authority or officer, is or can be ultimately raised out of a local rate as before defined:

Other expressions have the same meaning as in the Elementary Education Acts, 1870 to 1893.

Extent of Act and short title.

5.—(1.) This Act shall not extend to Scotland or Ireland.

(2.) This Act may be cited as the Voluntary Schools Act, 1897.