

As a comparison of the year's work with that of former years, I give the "classification after examination" for the past four years:—

—	1879.		1880.		1881.		1882.	
	Number.	Per cent.	Number.	Per cent.	Number.	Per cent.	Number.	Per cent.
Passed Standard VI. ...	8	·3	12	·4	40	1·4	20	0·66
Passed Standard V. ...	57	2·6	101	3·5	73	2·5	124	4·12
Passed Standard IV. ...	138	6·2	168	5·9	235	8·2	254	8·42
Passed Standard III. ...	221	10·0	390	13·8	455	16·0	509	16·87
Passed Standard II. ...	468	21·3	546	19·3	529	18·5	486	16·11
Passed Standard I. ...	394	17·9	521	18·4	420	14·7	487	16·11
Below Standard I. ...	907	41·3	1,095	38·6	1,107	38·7	1,136	37·66
	2,193	...	2,833	...	2,859	...	3,016	...

The following gives the percentage of passes to those presented for the last four years: In 1879, 1,159 out of 1,397, or 84·3 per cent.; in 1880, 1,538 out of 1,790, or 85·9 per cent.; in 1881, 1,346 out of 1,833, or 73·4 per cent.; in 1882, 1,460 out of 1,941, or 75·21 per cent. These numbers show that in percentage of passes the years 1879 and 1880 gave far better results than the past two years; but this is principally accounted for by the fact that, when the standards were introduced, teachers were allowed considerable latitude in classifying their scholars for examination, and as a rule the classification was sufficiently low to insure a pass. Now that repeated examinations have thoroughly gauged the scholar's ability, a pass can be secured only by work done during the year, and I am convinced, from the past year's experience, that little improvement on 75 per cent. of passes can be anticipated in the future; nor can this result be considered unsatisfactory. It is obvious that where the average attendance is only 76 per cent. of the roll number, or, in other words, where on the average 24 per cent. of the scholars are always absent from school, a large number cannot cover the year's work prescribed by the syllabus. It would probably not be too much to allow two-thirds of the failures as due to irregular attendance, leaving 10 per cent. of the scholars failing from defective instruction and other causes. In comparing our results with those of other districts, it is but just to observe that every child present on the day of inspection must be presented for examination in a standard above that last passed. A recent Government publication indicates that where a child—from illness, irregular attendance, or defective mental power—has been unable to overtake the work of the syllabus, he may be withheld from examination in his proper standard, and re-examined in the one already passed. Such an arrangement, though intended no doubt to relieve teachers of the results of failures for which they cannot be responsible, can be fairly brought into operation only when simple rules are followed by Inspectors and teachers as to the minimum attendance required, &c.; and, until explicit regulations on the matter are issued by the Education Department, I shall continue to require the presentation of all scholars in accordance with the Order in Council dated the 24th September, 1878, where it is directed that "No scholar shall be examined in a standard which he has already passed." At the same time Committees and teachers should remember that under existing arrangements 75 per cent. of passes shows satisfactory work. In this connection it should further be noted that, from the interest taken in the examinations by teachers and by the scholars themselves, the number presented for inspection is far above the average attendance, and as a natural consequence an undue proportion of irregular attendants comes under examination. The average attendance at the dates of examination was 2,728, while the number present at inspection was 3,016. It necessarily follows from these remarks that irregular attendance continues to be the great hindrance to progress in our schools, and any improvement in this respect would show a corresponding improvement in the percentage of passes. In the smaller district schools the attendance undoubtedly depends mainly on the teacher, for where his ability, personal influence, and popularity are acknowledged there is seldom any necessity to resort to other means of securing regular attendance; but in the larger town schools, where, on account of the mixed staff, the personal influence of the teacher is less directly felt, uniformly good attendance cannot at present be secured without coercion, and it is incumbent on Committees to see that the compulsory clauses of the Act are systematically enforced. In the single instance where this has been done—that of Waimate—the improved attendance is most marked.

The value of the instruction given in the various schools, and the results of the work in the several standards, may be gathered from the tables given above. The results, as a whole, show a slight improvement on those of last year. Fewer scholars have passed Standard VI., but this is more than compensated for by the increase in Standards V. and IV., and the other standards remain about the same. I regret that I cannot report any perceptible decrease in the large proportion of scholars—37·66 per cent.—who fail to reach the requirements of Standard I. Irregular attendance and inefficient instruction are jointly answerable for this state of things. Head-teachers reiterate the excuse that the heavy requirements of the upper standards render it impossible for them to devote a fair proportion of their time to the lower classes. Where the attendance enables assistance to be given, the infant classes are usually placed under the management of a pupil-teacher or a very poorly paid assistant, who, in the majority of cases, is left without assistance or efficient supervision. Head-teachers apparently fail to appreciate the importance of effective teaching in the elementary stages, and consequently find the greatest difficulty in obtaining intelligent work from the advanced classes. In the larger schools the less competent teachers are, as a rule, relegated to the infant departments, and at almost every inspection it is found necessary to insist upon a revision of the staff.

On referring to the table giving the passes in each standard, it will be seen that the passes registered in the lower standards are comparatively high—87 and 84 per cent.—and that the proportion of passes