

formally recognised, but it is made to refer to the number on the school roll instead of to any less number presented in the standards; so that, in future, whatever influence it may have will be rather to hasten than to hinder the presentation in standards. Another formula—the “percentage of failures”—has been introduced to express from a different point of view from that which has hitherto obtained the proportion subsisting between passes and failures. Pupils whose attendances during a certain period have not amounted to half-time will be allowed to pass if they can, but if they do not pass they will not be counted as failing; and the percentage of failures will express the proportion between the failures and the passes and failures taken together. On this plan irregular and short attendance will not affect the proportion of failures at all, and its effect upon the percentage of passes will be mitigated by being spread over the whole school roll.

THE STANDARDS.

The original programme of the examination in standards having been in use for six years, it seemed that the time had arrived for a full consideration of recommendations made for its improvement as the result of experience extending over a period equal to that of the full course described in the programme. Early in January a circular letter was addressed to all the Inspectors of Schools in the service of the several Education Boards, seeking their advice on certain proposals that had often been made, and inviting suggestions for the improvement of the syllabus. This letter and the Inspectors' replies appear in a separate paper (E.—1c), which also contains a copy of resolutions adopted by the New Zealand Educational Institute, and some other matter relating to the same question. A new Order in Council superseding the Order under which inspection has hitherto been carried on is to be issued at once.* The changes introduced by it will, it is believed, be found accordant with the general tenor of the recommendations and suggestions for which the Department is indebted to experienced Inspectors and teachers.

Under the old programme the subject of examination fell into two divisions, the first consisting of subjects in which any pupil must satisfy the Inspector in order to pass a standard, the other consisting of subjects respecting which the Inspector was to inquire, and, if necessary, to report, as to the kind and amount of instruction given to the several classes. It has become usual to distinguish the two groups of subjects as “pass-subjects” and “class-subjects.” The usage is not a bad one, but it involves some danger of misunderstanding. Thus, it appears to have been sometimes understood that because a subject had come to be called a pass-subject the Inspector was not at liberty to ascertain individual proficiency by class examination; and, again, in making comparisons between class-subjects in the sense here referred to and class-subjects in the sense of the English code, it seems to have been forgotten that in England a class-subject is one on account of which a special grant of money may be earned by the school. In the new syllabus the usage which distinguishes “pass” and “class” subjects is adopted, and receives authoritative definition. The “class-subject,” as defined, is, however, to be as necessary a part of every school course as a “pass-subject.” Experience has shown that where the Inspector is only directed to inquire, and, if necessary, to report upon a subject, such a subject finds a place in the time-tables of very few schools. In the new programme the work is arranged in three divisions—“pass-subjects,” from which history and a part of geography are excluded; “class-subjects,” including the history and geography excluded from the pass-subjects, and including also the more important of what have generally been called class-subjects; and “additional subjects,” including the subjects which small schools will not be required to undertake. Drawing is to be a pass-subject; but for the first year it will be only a class-subject for standards above the first; the next year it will be a pass-subject in the first two standards, and so on, until in the sixth year it is required for a pass in every standard.

Some alterations have been made in the definitions of the several subjects: these are, for the most part, in the direction of limiting the amount of work required, or of emphasizing limits which were not before expressed with sufficient clearness. In drafting the new regulations care has been taken to avoid con-

* See Appendix, p. 114.