

Of the 2,706 belonging to the standard classes and present at examination, 1,946 passed, giving a percentage of 72, which is the same as last year. The percentages for the several standards range from 50 in the Fifth to 91 in the First Standard. The percentage of passes might be made to appear better if we exclude the "exceptions," as is done in calculating the percentage of failures for each school. The percentage of failures being 24, we should then have 76 per cent. of passes. These percentages are not to be confounded with the perplexing percentage of passes given in the examination reports, which is calculated on the total number of children on the rolls. For this district the percentage of passes thus calculated could not be higher than 64 with every child presented passing his standard examination: the percentage obtained is 43. As I pointed out in my report of last year, it is not a sign of greater or less efficiency for a school to be above or below this average; but if one wishes to know how any particular school has done, or to compare school with school, he should look to the percentage of failures, the percentage on class subjects, and the additional marks as given in Appendix I. [Not reprinted.]

For the past two years the teachers in this district have been paid a bonus for the efficient instruction of their pupils in class and additional subjects. To obtain this bonus it was necessary to have a percentage of 50 at least on class subjects and to obtain satisfactory marks for additional subjects, no minimum being fixed in the latter, as the possibility of earning marks for two of the subjects—viz., singing and sewing—depends on conditions for which the teacher is not wholly responsible. If he cannot sing he is cut off from earning marks in this subject, and a sewing mistress is not allowed to a school whose average attendance does not reach thirty. The highest percentage on class subjects obtained by any school where all the standards were represented was 74, and the highest additional marks 85. The average percentage on class subjects for all the schools is 55, and the average of additional marks is 56. The corresponding figures for last year were 52 and 51; so that an improvement has been made in both. Although the Board has been compelled for financial reasons to withdraw for the present this bonus payment—and I am heartily sorry for it—I am persuaded from what I know of the teachers that the great majority of them, animated by the prospect of success rather than stimulated by the hope of a bonus payment for that success, will continue to treat these subjects with as much zeal and with as satisfactory results in the coming year as in the past.

CLASS S7.—In this class are included all those who have at any previous examination passed the Sixth Standard. As the sixth is the highest for which a syllabus of work is laid down in the regulations, it is the general practice to withdraw the scholars immediately after passing it; and teachers of small schools with all the standards represented in their classes, and some infant pupils besides, may well be pardoned for looking upon this withdrawal as a welcome relief. But in schools where two or more teachers are employed it should certainly be considered a laudable ambition on the headmaster's part to do his utmost to retain his best scholars. His opportunities of giving them direct instruction as a separate class will be few, but the pupils may be trusted to make good progress in many things with a little guidance in his spare moments. It is usual to keep the S7 working with the S6; but, although this is so, it is not to be supposed that a year spent in this way is lost time, for these pupils are almost always eager to learn, and the thorough grasp they get of their subjects by this year of revisal must prove a lasting benefit. Of the forty-five on the rolls, eleven were absent and thirty-four were examined in the work prescribed for the Sixth Standard, and almost without exception the work was exceedingly well done, many of the papers being models of neatness and general excellence. Some of these pupils had also received instruction in such secondary subjects as Latin, French, and algebra, and this higher work was not confined to the eight pupils of this class in the district high schools, who were taking these subjects as part of their regular course. From what I have said of this class I do not wish it to be inferred that I would add to the burdens of those teachers who look upon themselves as having already sufficient to bear; but I would gladly encourage those who undertake this additional work and who find their reward in the pleasure they derive from it and in the gratitude of their pupils.

PREPARATORY CLASSES.—The number of children too young or not sufficiently prepared for presentation in the First Standard is 1,566—about one-third of the pupils on the rolls. In twenty-four of the schools where the teacher is unassisted there are 226 children of this class, and, important as is the early training of the children—and many of the teachers are fully alive to this—they receive very little direct instruction, the immediate success of the standard classes being the teacher's chief aim. We have 157 preparatory pupils in eleven schools where the attendance entitles them to the privilege of having a pupil-teacher to aid the headteacher. In four of the eleven the headteacher takes the whole or part of the preparatory class, the pupil-teacher giving aid in the standard classes. This plan should be more general than it is—for the sake of the children in the first place, as it gives them the benefit of skilful teaching at a critical stage of their school course, and in the second place in the interests of the pupil-teacher, for whose training the teacher is responsible, and who has thus the advantage of acquiring skill in every department of school work. Fortunately, 1,183 children out of the total of 1,566 are to be found in schools with assistants, most of them certificated, and all with some years' experience, who have the infant department for their special charge; and their school hours are enlivened by their action songs, their class drill, and the pleasurable excitement of being in the company of many of their own age. Too frequently I am disappointed with the poor quality of the reading in these classes. There seems to be an idea prevailing among some of the teachers that one kind of reading—a monotonous sing-song, innocent alike of stops and expression—is to be accepted from children up to a certain indefinite period, when by some sudden change all this is to give place to a natural and intelligent style. But either this change does not come, or, if it does so, it has to be effected with much toil, which is felt to be the more irksome as it should be unnecessary, for there is no reason in the world why children should not be taught to read naturally from the first. Spelling is generally