

instruction in this subject. On the one hand, where female teachers are carrying on school work without help, the work is reported as varying from good to excellent; on the other hand, where this outside assistance is required, the sewing has not been so favourably reported upon. Midhirst, Rahott, and Warea are, however, notable exceptions, deserving special mention.

Thus far I have dealt with the required annual returns, which may indicate the progress of learning in this district, yet can give but a vague estimate of its true character. The annual percentages given in each school report are at times greatly misleading, especially when gratifying results follow the advent of a new teacher, or after the unsuccessful efforts of a standard, whose scholars manage to make a pass in the following year. The work in this district has now reached a stage from which little further progress will be made until its backward schools are placed under efficient instruction. If the position now reached is to be maintained and improved, your larger schools demand the appointment of trained and experienced assistants to undertake the work of the preparatory classes and lower standards; likewise the smaller schools would benefit by the employment of certificated female teachers where males are now engaged.

I have endeavoured to give through the medium of marks my own opinion of the quality of the instruction. In 1886 the percentage of these marks was 58 per cent.; the year following it rose to 59 per cent.; last year it had reached 62 per cent.; and for the year now under review a further advance to 64 per cent. has been made. In awarding the marks, ten is taken as the maximum for each subject; six as the passing number for boys and girls; but in the case of girls, when the sewing in the school has been reported as satisfactory by the award of twelve marks by the Ladies' Sewing Committee, five marks are accepted as the pass in all subjects except reading.

READING.—Although this subject gives a very high percentage of passes, it is by no means so efficiently taught as I desire it to be. There are very few schools in which it is well taught; indeed, excellence is rare: still, when the numerous difficulties under which teachers have to labour are considered, it appears to receive a fair share of each day's attention, judged by its slow but gradual improvement. In tone it is good, fluent, and fairly well articulated, but still fails in modulation and expression. In the bush districts scholars have but little spare time to read; besides, their stock of books is limited to their text ones, and perhaps a prize or an occasional loan of one from a more fortunate individual. Can nothing be done in the interests of these young people? Can they not read in school? Teachers might, with outside assistance, strive to start a library in their schools. Little money is required in these days of cheap editions of good books. Begun with the class that children will read, a variety of good reading matter could be added as funds permitted. The books could be used by teacher and pupils in class, when their freshness, either captivating or arousing the scholars, is certain to be a powerful stimulant in encouraging them to cultivate a love for reading. I am aware that there are a few public libraries in the district; but their volumes are not the class for youthful readers, neither are they suitable to interest nor encourage a child to read. I have a strong leaning to the use of unseen passages within standard limits for testing reading on examination day. Perhaps at the next revision of the syllabus this system of test may be permitted; meanwhile natural phrasing, the frequent use of the blackboard by printing easy words thereon, an intelligent explanation of passages read (not merely the giving of synonyms), and the cultivation of a good style are the main points likely to improve this subject.

SPELLING.—This is becoming a strong subject. There are only a few schools where unsatisfactory results are obtained. Good methods, if faithfully used, cannot fail in giving good results. Class failures are a sure sign of laziness on the teacher's part. I direct attention to a careful preparation of words pronounced nearly alike as the weakest point in the instruction of this subject.

ARITHMETIC.—The instruction in this subject is now progressing very satisfactorily. The mental papers were answered in much less time and more successfully than at last year's examinations. Too much prominence cannot be given to mental arithmetic—its practical application is so helpful in working questions accurately, while it aids in acquiring intelligent methods of working problems. Teachers will find the advanced work of standards much easier to teach if it be well taught in the lower classes. Practice and reduction were well done; so also was the usual tradesman's bill. Standard V. in a few schools had been poorly prepared. The too liberal use of test cards without teaching had something to do with such wholesale failures. Test cards are very beneficial when used at the right time. The work of Standards V. and VI. was much above any former year's efforts. The papers generally were carefully worked and done in good time. The percentage of passes in this subject was 70 per cent.

DRAWING.—I continue to test the drawing from figures on the blackboard on examination day, with results that are fairly creditable. To secure breadth of treatment, the paper used is ruled with large squares. Its use is allowed as far as Standard III. From this year's experience I conclude that the change to a single central line purposely traced, to obtain a figure of definite height, has removed any fear of equally creditable work not being procured from Standard IV. The model and geometrical tests were encouraging and frequently praiseworthy.

WRITING.—This is another strong subject in the majority of schools. At a few of these, however, an award of marks made on the day's slate and paper work of the higher standards would effect a revolution in the habit of careless ciphering and writing.

GRAMMAR.—This subject, which includes composition, is decidedly the weakest one. In Standard III. the grammar tests were frequently uneven. Parsing in Standards IV., V., and VI. was above former averages. The same remarks apply to the inflection and analysis of Standards V. and VI.; but Standard IV. had been badly prepared. Greater importance must be given to collective instruction and supervision in the teaching of composition. Success lies in systematic teaching, suitable exercises, and sufficient practice. The teaching should begin in Standard II., with complete sentences in ordinary class questioning. The object lesson gives an excellent opportunity for laying a good foundation. But the help of a scheme of synthetic exercises, prepared by myself, with practical aid wherever necessary at inspection visit, ought to be productive of improved