

most of these schools, but this can do no more than reveal the existence of weaknesses which might have been avoided had the head-teacher devoted a reasonable portion of his own time to the teaching of these classes. It is absurd to suppose that a head-teacher's time should be devoted solely (or even nearly so) to the services of a comparatively small number of the children under his charge, or that the greatest possible success in their case can compensate for failure in the lower classes, or exonerate him from his share of responsibility for those failures. Moreover, the devotion of some considerable part of his time to the teaching of the lower classes would ultimately render the head-teacher's work in the higher standards easier, when they come to be recruited by promotion of well-prepared scholars from below. I am confirmed in this opinion by observing the excellent results obtained in some schools having only one assistant, as well as in some with only one teacher, who is necessarily compelled to devote most of his time to the lower standards. Yet these schools are generally successful in passing the scholars in the higher.

There is another practice about which I scarcely like to speak in a report of this kind, as I have no positive grounds for supposing it to be prevalent in this district. Vague rumours are however afloat about teachers endeavouring to find out the nature and scope of questions set at schools examined before their own, and proceeding to "coach" up their scholars on the lines thus ascertained. This pernicious system must stamp all who adopt it, or who assist it in any way, as eminently unfitted for the important duties intrusted to them. But setting aside for the moment the meanness and dishonesty of such a practice, it is more than likely that such underhand methods would bring about a greater collapse than could possibly have occurred if the teacher had worked on steadily and honestly throughout the year without any undue regard to the examination. If, as I venture to hope, the rumours referred to have no solid foundation in fact, then what I have said can give offence to no one; but, if otherwise, "let the galled jade wince."

Table 4 shows the number of scholars in the four upper standards who passed in each of the "pass" subjects, and it will be observed that, as in former years, arithmetic and geography are the least successfully taught, judging from the results obtained at the examination. This is by no means peculiar to Marlborough. Several of the Inspectors, in their reports for 1895, notice the same weakness.

Though the outcome of the examination is in some respects very unsatisfactory, especially as regards results obtained in some of the largest, and generally most successful, of our schools, there is still some cause for congratulation if we notice the very excellent work done by some of our oldest and of our youngest teachers under the same circumstances. The future educational prospects of the district cannot be considered gloomy when we see the success of the young teachers who have been taught and trained within its borders.

The examination of the two lower standards is now left in the hands of the teachers, and on the circular notifying the dates of the examination I requested them to furnish me with copies of the tests employed by them in these examinations. In most instances this was done, and, judging as far as possible from the questions only, there appears to be no risk of premature passes in these standards. In some cases the tests employed were more severe than I was accustomed to give for the same standards, especially in spelling and arithmetic. It is so manifestly to the interest of the teachers of the larger schools to guard against premature admission to the higher standards that I do not share in the misgivings expressed by some Inspectors as to the sufficiency of the teachers' examinations. At the smaller aided and "family" schools the case is different, and the teachers are certainly more liable to be influenced by parents unwisely anxious to have their children promoted to the higher standards before they are sufficiently prepared. Teachers of such schools are, however, strongly advised to resist firmly any pressure in this direction, as it can only result in greater disappointment to all concerned in following years.

Class Subjects.—The treatment of the class subjects has evidently received more attention this year. The following table will give a fair idea of the improvement that has been effected in all of them; and though still far from satisfactory (taken in connection with the results in pass subjects) there is evidence that they are on the "upward grade." In grammar there is certainly a marked improvement, which may perhaps be regarded as the consequence of the strictures passed on that subject in my last report, and may be accepted as an earnest of still further improvement in the future. Additional subjects also show a slight improvement on the whole.

Comparison of Results in Class and Additional Subjects expressed as a Percentage of the Number of Schools examined.

—	Number of Schools examined.		Poor.		Poor to Fair.		Fair to Good.		Good to Very Good.		Very Good to Excellent.	
	1895.	1896.	1895.	1896.	1895.	1896.	1895.	1896.	1895.	1896.	1895.	1896.
<i>Class subjects—</i>												
Grammar ...	52	57	23·0	1·9	39·6	34·6	29·1	46·1	8·3	9·7	...	7·7
History ...	52	57	24·5	8·9	31·1	44·5	31·1	24·4	13·3	20·0	...	2·2
E. science and O.I.	52	57	29·5	28·0	43·2	34·0	27·3	30·0	...	8·0	...	...
Mental arithmetic	52	57	47·5	16·3	45·0	60·4	7·5	21·0	...	2·3	...	...
<i>Additional subjects—</i>												
Recitation ...	52	57	11·5	14·0	36·6	33·3	46·2	42·1	5·7	10·5	...	...
Drill ...	10	8	20·0	12·5	20·0	25·0	40·0	37·5	20·0	25·0	...	...
Singing...	7	9	...	...	57·1	22·2	...	44·4	42·9	33·3	...	...
Needlework ...	33	37	...	...	15·1	18·9	63·7	46·0	21·2	32·4	...	2·7
Comprehension ...	52	57	15·4	8·8	26·9	35·1	46·2	33·3	11·5	22·8	...	...