

Class-subjects.—Our estimate of the efficiency of the schools in class-subjects is given in the subjoined table, most of the terms used being supplied by the Education Department:—

	Not expected.	Not taught.	Inferior.	Moderate.	Fair.	Satis- factory.	Good.	Excellent.
Grammar ...	8	0	37	18	38	8	9	0
History ...	8	4	12	1	35	18	35	5
Geography, Standard II. ...	20	0	17	4	17	6	20	34
Object-lessons and science...	0	0	3	3	19	23	43	27
Mental arithmetic ...	0	0	31	16	48	11	12	0

The first column shows those schools which have no classes to take the particular subject prescribed—*e.g.*, the number 20 denotes the number of schools in which there were at the time of examination no Second Standard children. Grammar and mental arithmetic are evidently the most unsatisfactory in this list, and we are pleased to welcome even the very slight improvement shown in the treatment of the former, a subject of great educative value, one in which the element of cram can be almost eliminated, and one which vies with arithmetic in forming the best basis of a logical training.

In the report to the Education Department embodying the results of the examinations will be found a column containing in one word a summary of our estimate of the efficiency of the instruction in the five class-subjects in each school. In explanation of the way in which this has been arrived at we may here state that the whole have been averaged, and that the word expressing the lower mark of efficiency has been retained unless the average of all the subjects fully reached the next higher one. When a subject has been altogether omitted no mark is given, and the average of the whole is consequently reduced. In mental arithmetic we have this year given individual tests to all children above Standard III. The questions consisted of very simple exercises, for the most part of a common business character, such as finding the value of a small number of articles when the price of one is given. The average marks of the class have been generally so low as to clearly show that even if a few bright children can do such mental exercises well the majority are very poorly trained. We regret that teachers, when giving lessons before the blackboard, do not take more advantage of the opportunity thus offered of giving practice in mental calculations, as the loss in celerity alone is so obvious.

History, on the other hand, shows a decided improvement, and we are generally very well pleased with the work done in science and object-lessons, though there still prevails a tendency to merely impart information about unseen and unfamiliar objects, to the neglect of the cultivation of the children's powers of personal observation, comparison, and criticism.

Additional Subjects.—As in the case of the class-subjects, we append a corresponding table dealing with the additional subjects:—

	Not expected.	Not taught.	Inferior.	Moderate.	Fair.	Satis- factory.	Good.	Excellent.
Recitation ...	0	1	1	0	33	23	37	23
Drill ...	0	77	0	1	6	10	15	0
Singing...	0	82	2	0	7	13	9	5
Needlework ...	21	15	1	0	8	28	27	18
Comprehension ...	0	0	11	11	47	19	20	10

The twenty-one schools indicated in the first column are, of course, in charge of sole-teachers who are males. The children are very generally trained to recite audibly and distinctly, and in many cases with feeling and expression. In this respect a marked improvement has been made in the last few years. In some cases the amount prepared during the year is too meagre, and better judgment might be displayed in making the selections, which should be more suitable and varied.

The needlework has been generally submitted to the criticism of lady examiners, who, for the most part, as our tabulated record shows, have looked upon it with approving eyes. In some instances their reports have been both discriminating and instructive. There is no excuse for the neglect of this important subject in fifteen schools in which female teachers are employed. Though the additional subjects are not expected from schools under sole-teachers, we regret that singing and drill are not more commonly taught, especially the last-named subject, which is apparently treated in the Education Act as compulsory for all boys.

Though by no means satisfied that the majority of our school-children attend as regularly as they might, there is cause for gratification in the marked improvement in the classification of our teachers, and the very general evidence we have received of more intelligent methods of training. The manners of the children are frank and open, the signs of extreme shyness which were at one time common in two or three remote country schools having almost entirely disappeared, while orderly attention and eagerness to please usually prevail on examination-day. Very rarely, indeed, have we had occasion to complain of pupils communicating with one another or practising any petty dishonesties.

That many of our teachers, too, have a higher aim than that of merely imparting information is clearly apparent. Honesty, obedience, application, and order are almost everywhere inculcated, and in many cases politeness, kindness, and consideration for others are taught by example as well as by precept. When competent teachers possessing such qualifications as these carry on their work under a strong sense of devotion to duty no one can doubt that the training given will tend to the formation and building-up of character, which after all is the real object of any sound educational system.

We have, &c.,

G. A. HARKNESS, M.A., } Inspectors.
W. LADLEY, }

The Chairman, Education Board, Nelson.