

proportion expressed as a percentage was 68·8. Of the 3,226 in the preparatory classes, 571 were above eight years old. The chief causes given by the teachers for the non-presentation of these pupils were: "Under two years at school" and "Very irregular attendance." In parts of this district the children have to go long distances to school, and over roads at times almost impassable. Owing to this the school life of many does not begin until the age of seven or eight years has been reached, and then for some time their attendance is generally very irregular.

The average ages still continue somewhat high; the mean, however, is one month lower than for 1899, and for the first time in the history of the district the average for Standard I. is under nine years.

In accordance with the new regulations the passes in Standards I. to V. were, with few exceptions, the results of the teachers' examinations. The exceptions were in cases where teachers had failed to carry out correctly the regulations with regard to filling in the examination schedules, where teachers had taken charge of schools a very short time before the date of the Inspector's visit, or where—but this happened only in one or two cases—the Inspector's results were substituted for the teacher's. We examined very nearly as fully as we had been accustomed to do under the old regulations, and our results in the majority of the schools practically agreed with those of the teachers' examinations. The standard according to which passes were granted varied considerably in the different schools. Some teachers took full advantage of the regulation with regard to the limit for a pass—"work equal to the requirements of the next lower Standard *may* be accepted in any two of the subjects," &c. (the subjects here noted include all except reading)—and awarded a pass to a pupil who might have failed, say, in arithmetic and composition; others refused to grant a pass for the Standard to pupils that failed to reach the pass-limit in more than one of the subjects. Again, some granted, and others refused, a pass for the Standard when the work in arithmetic was very bad; and, again, the standard with regard to the quality of the work in the individual subjects varied. This was very marked in composition, where the quality of the work in papers judged by one teacher "good enough for a pass" fell much below the standard required by another. Such want of uniformity was to be expected in the first year's experience under the new regulations. In our reports on the various schools, as well as in our intercourse with the teachers at examinations, we gave suggestions and directions with regard to the standard which should regulate the granting of passes, and I fully expect to find this year a much nearer approach to a uniform standard in the schools throughout the district. In concluding this matter, I may say that the teachers as a body showed due care and discrimination in their examinations, and that it was not very often that we had to comment adversely on the passes.

The following comparison of percentages of passes on the number examined as showing the results under the old and the new regulations is interesting:—

	1899.	1900.		1899.	1900.
Standard VI. ...	66	83	Standard III. ...	79	86
" V. ...	66	85	" II. ...	94	93
" IV. ...	76	87	" I. ...	94	91

A very considerable increase in the percentages is noticeable in the upper Standards. Two facts, if not altogether, at least to a very considerable extent, account for this. Under the new regulations the subjects for a pass are fewer, and the work is judged more leniently, than in former years. In Standards III. to V. drawing and geography no longer hold a place in the syllabus as pass-subjects, and, as already pointed out, failure in any two subjects except reading may not fail for the Standard. But as regards Standard VI., where the increase in the percentage of passes is as marked as in Standards III. to V., the conditions of examination were much the same as in 1899: geography and drawing were pass-subjects, and the passes were the Inspectors'. One fact, however, may have helped to increase the number of passes here. It had been our custom to refuse a pass when a pupil failed to reach the requirements of the Standard in *any* two of the subjects; in such a case, under the new regulations, a pass was granted provided one of the two subjects was geography or drawing.

I shall make only one or two remarks on the individual subjects. The work in arithmetic was very satisfactory, except that in Standard V., which was very poor indeed. It cannot reasonably be said that this inferior work was due to any difficulty in the cards, for I think the tests issued the past year by the Department were very fair. During the year, in accordance with your Board's resolution, the style of the writing was changed from the Vere Foster to the Collins's Graphic. In a few schools the change has produced good results: in many schools the promise of success has not yet been made evident. No doubt the getting out of the one style into the other has been attended with difficulties, both to pupils and teachers. Composition is not a strong subject in the majority of our schools. Very rarely did the papers give evidence of original work: often the essays or letters of the different pupils in the one class were nearly word for word alike. Probably our custom of taking the subjects from lists submitted to us by the teachers is accountable for this. In future an endeavour will be made to adopt tests which may tend to discourage such memory work.

Class-subjects.—The work, on the whole, in these subjects was very fair. Grammar showed a slight improvement in many of the schools, but too often it was our experience to examine very inferior work in this subject. Drawing and geography have not deteriorated since they became class-subjects. The appearance made in geography was often highly satisfactory. We examined this subject nearly altogether orally, and in this way, taking a class as a whole, a better opportunity was afforded of judging as to how the subject had been taught than when as a pass-subject the examination was individual, and the test written.