

when the failures amounted to 15·58 per cent. of the number examined. Last year the failures amounted to 15·85 per cent. of the number examined, thus showing considerable improvement this year. The failures in the several Standards, compared with the same figures for last year, show : In Standard VI., 9 per cent. more ; in Standard V., 14 per cent. less ; in Standard IV., 11 per cent. less ; in Standard III., 12 per cent. less ; in Standard II., 5 per cent. more ; and in Standard I., 5·5 per cent. more. The lower Standards were examined in pass-subjects, as in former years, by the head teachers only ; and the figures given would seem to indicate that the teachers recognise the necessity for laying a good foundation in Standards I. and II., in view of the important alterations with regard to the examination for promotion.

The foregoing statistics, however, must be received with considerable caution, as the influence of the new regulations upon the results of the examination is at present an unknown quantity, and cannot be even approximately estimated. In conducting the examination in pass-subjects I followed the same course as heretofore, and examined every scholar myself. The teachers, in accordance with the new regulations, had previously examined all standards except the Sixth, and had entered their results on the schedules. Whenever my results differed from those obtained by the teacher I substituted my figures for his, sometimes raising and sometimes lowering the figures under the subjects, though the final result was in most cases unaffected. Owing to the peculiar leniency of the regulations, which permit a scholar to be promoted if he fail altogether in any two out of five subjects, providing that reading is not one of them, scholars can fail in, say, spelling and arithmetic, or spelling and composition, and yet be entitled to promotion. This was one of the subjects that was discussed at the recent conference, and perhaps some alteration may be the result.

The number of scholars in the whole district who passed at the teachers' examination, but failed under mine, was twenty-four ; and, on the other hand, three who failed with the teachers were passed by me. In future, however, if teachers of the larger schools (following the instructions contained in the Standard Regulations) hold periodical examinations of their schools, and preserve the records of such examinations for my inspection, I shall not interfere with the teacher's verdict unless I shall feel called upon to do so in consequence of some manifest inconsistency being discovered as the result of my own examination.

The length of the school year—*i.e.*, the number of times that the schools had been open since the previous examination—varied very considerably. Leaving out all schools that were not open during one quarter of the year, the average number of half-days was 395. The greatest number was 539, and the least 312. Allowing eight weeks for holidays, the full year contains about 440 half-days. Twenty-seven schools were open 400 times or more, while two were open 521 and 539 times respectively, owing to the date of their examinations being postponed.

Leaving out all schools having less than ten scholars, and adopting the same scale of marks that was employed last year, the remaining schools can be classified, as regards the result of my examination of Standards III., IV., V., and VI., as follows : Very good, 12 schools ; good, 11 ; poor, 3 ; bad, 1. In this last case the present teacher is not responsible for the condition of the school, he having been recently appointed. The school had suffered from the illness and death of the previous teacher, who himself found it in a very backward and neglected condition.

At sixteen of the smaller schools all the scholars examined gained promotion, and nearly all the remainder produced very creditable results. On the whole, the character of the work done at these little schools, so liberally supported by the Board throughout the length and breadth of this district, is such as fully to justify their existence, since they furnish the means of a fairly good primary education to, in the aggregate, a large number of children who would otherwise be deprived of all the benefits of the Education Act.

Again I have the satisfaction of pointing to the excellent work done at some of the Board schools under a single teacher—in many cases a mistress—and I think the time has arrived when the Board should consider the question of amending the regulation which makes the salaries of mistresses in charge of schools 10 per cent. less than those of masters.

*Pass-subjects.*—This term, which I believe will soon be entirely disused, is still employed in the forms of the examination report furnished by the Department, and, in order to compare the work done this year with that of previous years, I subjoin, in Table 4 of this report, a summary of the results in the four upper standards at my examination. Comparing these results with those of last year, an improvement is to be observed in spelling, composition, and arithmetic, although the last-named subject still appears the weakest, a state of things which seems to be inevitable, and, considering the time usually occupied by it, almost inexplicable. The improvement in spelling is more satisfactory in view of the fact that the majority of the scholars were examined in the new reading-book for the first time.

*Class and Additional Subjects.*—In conformity with the requirements of the Government returns, the efficiency of the schools in these subjects is given in Table 5. Compared with the same table of last year, there is a fair improvement all round, and a few more schools have made praiseworthy attempts to introduce drill and singing.

I am still strongly impressed with the necessity for limiting the number of class-subjects to be undertaken in the smaller schools, and I am convinced that by such limitation a great improvement would result in the more thorough treatment of a few subjects of the teacher's own selection. I have for years past continually remarked upon the absurdity of expecting the sole teacher of a school to attempt to teach fifteen separate subjects in twenty-five hours a week, and, poor as some of the results in these subjects are, the only wonder is that they are no worse.

I hope, however, that better days are coming for teachers and children alike, when permission will be accorded them to select, say, two from a list of optional subjects corresponding to the present class-subjects. If this privilege were granted it would be possible for children to receive a fairly thorough grounding in the principles of the subjects chosen, and to retain an intelligent com-