

6 per cent., in Standard V.; twenty-two, or nearly 9 per cent., in Standard IV.; twenty-two, or 8 per cent., in Standard III.; eleven, or 4 per cent., in Standard II.; and seven, or nearly 3 per cent., in Standard I. These figures show an improvement all round of from 1 to 4 per cent. The high percentage of failures in Standard VI. is no doubt partly due to the fact of the syllabus for that standard containing two pass-subjects which were class-subjects in all the standards below, though arithmetic, as usual, is responsible for a considerable number. It is an official fiction that the placing of a subject in the class group ought not to affect the thoroughness of the teaching of that subject, but experience shows that there is a vast difference in the effect of that teaching as exhibited at the annual examinations. Nor is this necessarily due in all cases to any want of attention on the part of the teacher. The fact of a subject not being required to secure promotion is well known to all the scholars, and no doubt frequently induces a carelessness and indifference which, when combined, perhaps, with a distaste for the subject itself, cannot fail to neutralise to a great extent the most efficient teaching, and therefore to bring discredit upon a school which is not always deserved.

In my last report I expressed the intention of leaving for the future the results given by the teachers unaltered unless under special circumstances. As, however, such special circumstances have arisen, and as I was unwilling to make any invidious distinctions, I felt bound to treat all schools this year as before, taking advantage of clause 6 of the regulations empowering me to "examine all the pupils of the school." I was also more inclined to do so since my absence on the Public-school Teachers' Salaries Commission prevented my renewing that valuable insight into and experience of the actual work of the schools which the visits of inspection so abundantly afford. I therefore substituted my results for those of the teacher whenever they differed, and in some of the large schools several special cases were considered in consultation with the teachers and marked accordingly. Altogether I refused promotion in thirty-two cases which were passed by the teachers.

As the failures in the Board schools amount to 29 per cent. of the number examined, while the number for the whole district is 21 per cent., it appears that the larger schools are relatively less successful, on the whole, than the smaller ones, a fact which I have frequently noticed and which is easily accounted for.

I think it is highly desirable that there should be some common understanding with respect to the promotion of scholars from one standard to another. The regulations say that pupils in Standards III., IV., and V. may be allowed to pass though failing in two subjects, so that a scholar may fail in spelling and arithmetic, or in spelling and composition, and yet be promoted to a higher standard. I think it should be recognised that the provision is not mandatory, but merely permissive, and that, in the best interests of scholars, it should be applied only under exceptional circumstances, and that great weakness in any two subjects should be a bar to promotion. This should undoubtedly be the case in Standards V. and VI., and neither "exemption" nor "proficiency" certificates should be issued to a scholar who fails in any two of the pass-subjects of his standard.

*Class-subjects.*—Taking thirty schools in which all the upper standards are represented, and employing the notation prescribed by the Department, the following shows the amount of success that has attended the attempt to fulfil this portion of the standard requirements: Geography—Good, 13; satisfactory, 7; fair, 6; moderate, 1; inferior, 3. Drawing—Excellent, 1; good, 3; satisfactory, 12; fair, 8; moderate, 6. Grammar—Good, 1; satisfactory, 2; fair, 9; moderate, 11; inferior, 7. History—Good, 5; satisfactory, 11; fair, 6; moderate, 2; inferior, 6. Science—Satisfactory, 6; fair, 13; moderate, 6; inferior, 5. Recitation—Good, 5; satisfactory, 3; fair, 12; moderate, 10. The schools not included in these figures are chiefly small aided schools, in which one (or more) of the upper standards was not represented. Handwork, although not unknown in some of our schools, has not yet been generally taken up, but I expect a fair number will have something of the kind to present at the next examination. Several schools continue to employ kindergarten methods in the preparatory and lower standards, and some very pretty and creditable examples of such work were shown at the annual visit. I expect many of the schools will introduce modelling this year, and have already a supply of plasticine for that purpose.

*Additional Subjects.*—Of the three subjects now included in this group needlework is taken up in all schools having women teachers, and, in not a few cases, with creditable results, considering the very short time that can be spared for the purpose. Singing is practised at ten schools. There are a few larger schools not taking this subject, but I do not consider that this must necessarily be regarded as "a ground of reproach," clause 10 of the regulations notwithstanding. In most of the schools named the singing is taught by ear only, and in few is there much instruction in the theory. Drill was presented in nine schools. In the Blenheim and Renwick Schools the drill and the exercises of both boys and girls were very good.

*School Year.*—If such reports as this are to be employed as a means of comparison, either with schools in the same district or with those of the colony generally, it is of the greatest importance that there should be something like uniformity in the length of the school year—that is, in the number of half-days during which the schools are at work. Leaving out schools that have been closed for a portion of the year, the average number of times that the other schools in the district have been open is 334. The longest school year was 462 half-days, two small aided schools having been open so often. The shortest was 286 half-days. The average was slightly lower than it was last year, owing partly to the extra holidays given in connection with the Royal visit. The scholars who failed in Standard VI. attended, on the average, 287 times, or less than 144 days out of the year. The highest attendance of these was 364, and the lowest 119 half-days, or sixty days out of the whole year. The requirements of the syllabus can with difficulty be met in well-staffed schools by a full year's attendance, so that the only wonder is that so few fail to come up to the standard after such a poor attendance. Although the evils of irregular attendance