

The total number on the roll is 133 below that of 1900, the decrease being most noticeable in Standards III. and V. The number examined in standards includes some who, though examined by their teachers, were not present at our examinations. When their absence was satisfactorily accounted for, and we judged from the teachers' results that there was no question of their ability to pass the examination, we thought it would be too severe to deprive them of their certificates. The opposite state of matters prevailed at one school, several children who had absented themselves from the teacher's examination turning up eagerly at ours. This was exceptional, as we generally found very little difference in the attendance at the two examinations. The average age is much lower than in 1900, especially in Standards IV. and VI., where the difference amounts to eleven and five months respectively.

The total number present at examination was 5,345. At forty-five schools, of which Motupipi (62), Richmond Girls' (56), Hope (49), and Dovedale (44) were the largest, every child on the rolls was present, whilst Black's Point (92) and Foxhill (88) had each only one absentee.

The new regulations for the inspection and examination of schools wisely allow an Inspector considerable latitude in his method of conducting an examination. In regard to the examination in pass-subjects of Standards I. to V., our general practice this year in the larger schools has been to test a school's efficiency by sampling the work of each class. As a rule one or more classes were also fully examined in detail; but the valuation of the head teacher was accepted, unless we strongly disapproved. In the smaller schools controlled by sole teachers we found it advisable in fairness to all to re-examine each scholar in pass-subjects. We have always doubted the wisdom of expecting teachers to examine for certificates classes which they themselves have taught. The mere setting of the examination-papers places a conscientious teacher between the horns of this dilemma: Is he to set questions of a form with which he has familiarised the children, or is he purposely to avoid them? In the one case the tests may be so stereotyped, in the other so altogether unusual, as to appear quite unfair to an impartial outsider. As a rule, in the largest schools we have had little occasion to differ from the judgment of the head teacher. In the small and intermediate schools—that is, for example, those in which two teachers are employed in each—very marked differences of opinion have been displayed. The general tendency among such teachers when acting as examiners is to represent every scholar in every class as perfectly capable of doing his work in every subject, a conclusion which our own examination has rarely, if ever, confirmed. When allowance is made for the natural inclination to put on as good an appearance as possible, and for the degree of uncertainty which necessarily attends upon examinations, causing the same candidate to produce different results on two successive days, one is forced to the conclusion that a fairly successful teacher does not necessarily make a good examiner. In most cases the teacher manifestly has been either lax or not sufficiently strict in supervision, having failed to take steps to isolate the different members of the class. We have too often had to complain during our own examination of neglect in this particular, the supervision being then considered the teacher's special function. Rarely has the discipline been so thorough as to render keen supervision unnecessary, and keenness is often the very point that is lacking. Having failed to attain their first and highest aim teachers too often hopelessly neglect the second, which on examination day at any rate would make amends for the absence of the first. Some of the sole teachers, again, we fear, do not, strictly speaking, examine at all. The children are so dependent upon the teacher for help and direction during the time of teaching that the teacher apparently fails to distinguish between teaching and examination, and still allows these aids to continue. For faults such as we have indicated, and for the defective classification arising from them, the after-examination of the Inspector is to some extent a remedy. By the regulations the Inspector's results are final, and the power thus conferred has, during the last two years, acted as a check upon the hasty promotion of scholars in Standards I. and II., a weakness which we have continually pointed out for years past. The examination in this district of Standards I. and II. has on this account been more exacting during this year and the one previous. Possibly other Inspectors have had similar experiences, and the fact of their having had (by the new regulations) more control over these classes may have had some effect in reducing the number of passes, which, as shown in the report of the Minister of Education, was lower last year than previously.

In fifteen schools the examination showed unsatisfactory results. All but one of these were small schools taught by sole teachers, most of whom were uncertificated, several of them being but recently appointed. In some instances, for various causes, the scholars had not had a full year's preparation, and in these we shall be greatly surprised if better results are not forthcoming next year.

Reading and recitation are usually well taught, though in some parts a twangy pronunciation, particularly of the "ou" and other vowel sounds, prevails. The aspirate difficulty, though not common, is still in evidence. More care in the selection of teachers and unremitting attention on their part are essential to maintain the purity of our mother tongue. The recitations are often tastefully rendered, especially when the children have been trained to recite simultaneously. But preparation should not be spasmodic; some verses should be learned each week, and a list of all pieces studied during the year presented for examination, those specially prepared being marked. Reading is in one sense now the most important subject in the syllabus, a pass in it being essential to obtaining a certificate in Standards I. to V. The tendency on this account to accept inferior work must be carefully guarded against.

From the percentage of passes given below it would appear that arithmetic is slowly improving. In estimating the number of passes in this subject we have counted a pass in lower standard work than that for which the child was presented in English as a failure. The arithmetic passes are as follows: 1901—Standard VI., 58 per cent.; Standard V., 63 per cent.; Standard IV., 67 per cent.; Standard III., 76 per cent. 1900—Standard VI., 62 per cent.; Standard V., 47 per cent.; Standard IV., 66 per cent.; Standard III., 77 per cent. 1899—Standard VI., 48 per cent.; Standard V., 57 per cent.; Standard IV., 69 per cent.; Standard III., 69 per cent.