

should be examined with the lower class to which it has been found necessary to remove him, his name, however, being carefully distinguished in the examination schedule from the names of those that are formally presented, and his success not being counted as a formal pass."

During the past two years the concession contained in the above note has, in the great majority of our schools, been misinterpreted. The children marked "non-presented" on the examination schedules have been taught with those presented, and their unfitness has apparently been discovered only a few days before the examination. We contend that, if children are considered capable of working in a standard throughout the year, they ought to be tested in that standard at the annual examination. When a teacher finds that a child, through illness, mental incapacity, irregular attendance, or other cause, is unable to keep pace with a higher class, he has the option of placing that child in a lower. This is, in our opinion, both a wise and just discretionary power to give head-teachers. With regard to the vexed question of what constitutes a "fair attendance," we would suggest that teachers be held responsible for all scholars who have made two-thirds of the possible attendances, making due allowance, of course, for all children who suffer from any mental defect.

The methods of instruction, judging not only by the higher percentages gained, but by the improved quality of work, are improving. A few general remarks will now be made on the different subjects taught in our schools.

READING.—We are pleased to be able to state that there is a noticeable improvement in reading and recitation in several schools. The faults so prominent last year were much amended. Very considerable attention has been paid to secure distinctness of utterance, due emphasis, and a knowledge of the meanings of the passages read and recited. In many instances the reading of the lower standards would have done credit to children much more advanced. In some schools, however, the teaching of this subject is marked more or less by the defects pointed out last year.

SPELLING AND DICTATION.—The spelling on the whole was good. Comparatively few failures had to be recorded. In the lower standards and preparatory classes there does not seem to be any fixed method of teaching this subject, the value of the letters not being pointed out and fully mastered by the pupils. While the difficult words were correctly spelled, we noticed that in the paper work of even the higher standards there was a far too large percentage of mistakes in easy words of every-day occurrence. The dictation lessons will require to be much more carefully revised.

WRITING.—This subject in a few of our schools is exceedingly well taught, but in the majority it is not to be commended. Our attention has been drawn to the number of different copybooks in use, very few schools in a town or neighbourhood using the same set, so that when children leave one school to attend another they have to unlearn or relearn. Were this amended, and *writing lessons* given at least weekly, we should have greatly improved copybooks. Again, in some of our schools a large amount of work is required to be written out at home in exercise-books, and this being too often done in a slovenly and careless manner neutralizes the effect of the instruction given in this subject.

ARITHMETIC.—The results in arithmetic may be regarded as more satisfactory than those of any previous year. Better and shorter methods of work are being adopted in the upper standards, the reasoning faculties of the children are being brought into more vigorous play. In Standard IV there is less improvement generally, though in a few schools the questions set were well answered, thus evidently showing that careless and mechanical teaching was answerable in a great measure for the bad work in the remainder. In the other standards the quality and accuracy of the work are to be commended. In only a few schools is mental arithmetic carefully and systematically taught. It is not uncommon to find children who can work correctly difficult sums on paper unable to solve the simplest questions mentally.

GRAMMAR.—In far too many schools the failures in this subject have been more numerous than in any other of the school course. Throughout all the standards in which grammar is required to be taught, the answering was too often mere guess-work. Judging by the exercise-books, too much time is devoted to mechanical parsing. Composition has not received that amount of attention to which it is justly entitled.

GEOGRAPHY. In this subject the requirements of the syllabus were well fulfilled in a good proportion of the schools examined. There was a great improvement in the results obtained in Standards II. and III. Local geography is still in a great measure neglected: we have known children unable to name the nearest river to their school, or the county in which they lived. In the geography papers the names of places were as a rule badly spelled even in the higher standards. Except in the case of the smaller schools, history is fairly well taught.

EXTRA SUBJECTS.—In several schools, science is taught with a very fair amount of success. In the town schools it generally happens that some member of the staff is specially qualified to give instruction in this subject, and, when such is the case, the results are thoroughly good. In small country schools, when the teachers are working single-handed, it is well-nigh impossible to teach the most elementary portions of the subject, and the time given to it would be far more profitably employed in teaching the essentials. Object-lessons, as given by some teachers, are still quite useless. Very little information on the subjects treated was possessed by the children examined. The needlework, so far as we are able to judge, was, in the majority of cases, creditable, but we look on the examination of this subject by Inspectors as unsatisfactory. If Committees were to appoint ladies in the districts to examine the work done, and also to see the girls at work some day before the examination, we believe good would be done. We noticed that parents too often took the work to be done into their own hands, regardless of the requirements of the standards, and it was a very common complaint with teachers that they found it impossible to make children bring proper sewing-materials. We have often seen some girls idling away their time during this lesson, or worse—interfering with the work of the other scholars. Special prizes are offered for proficiency in this branch of the school course in certain districts, and with admirable results.