

branches there is decided improvement: mental and ready arithmetic, composition, history and geography, and in the neatness, order, and style of the paper-work. Due attention has been given by most of the teachers to the suggestions made in my last report, and in a circular letter issued to them. Historical and geographical reading-books are now in common use; and to their introduction, and to the use of hand-made maps, I attribute much of the improvement in geography and history. In some schools the classes show a very extensive knowledge of these subjects, and a *vivâ-voce* examination becomes very animated, the most difficult questions seldom going unanswered.

The results in reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic are the most important, because they constitute the most useful subjects of primary education, and absorb a large portion of the teacher's time. Looking at the results in these subjects from an attainable and not from an ideal standpoint, I think the work done is, for the most part, of a satisfactory character. And, further, I am pleased to say that during the past year I have had proportionately larger results to chronicle, showing work of more improved quality, than any which I have recorded in previous years. There have not only been no cases of serious failure with badly-taught classes in large schools, but, on the other hand, several large classes in the Third and Fourth Standards brought up most commendable work in all sections.

There are a few cases of schools which have suffered considerably by a frequent change of teachers, and one or two in which the staff requires strengthening; but the teachers at the head of most of the larger schools, and those in charge of many of the smaller ones, are experienced and reliable.

In the standard examinations this year I have adopted the suggestion made to the Inspectors in England, that all passes should be marked strong or weak. I find it useful in determining the quality of the class-work, and in distinguishing at the time of the examination the good scholar from the weaker one. It will, I think, lead to some emulation in the classes to obtain the "strong" mark.

The work varies very much in the different schools, every teacher putting his own impress upon his work. It would be quite competent for me to picture a strong contrast in the teaching and influence of any two teachers doing the same class-work under what is assumed to be precisely the same system. And the results of this class-teaching vary very considerably and in many respects. It must always be understood that a pass merely satisfies the examiner as to the minimum of excellence required. I will illustrate my remarks by giving particulars of two cases of results in large classes as presented. Both are taken from good schools. The first case is that of a very large Third Standard class in a city school. Here 138 names appeared on the schedule. Six of these had previously passed the standard, and were therefore classed low. Two of the six were absent. Of the other 132, three were absent, but only two of them were expected passes. On examination three failed in reading, fifty-one in spelling, four in writing, sixty-one in arithmetic, ten in grammar, twenty-four in geography, and five in history. Altogether forty-seven candidates failed in two or more subjects; and, as a matter of fact, twenty-one of them failed in three or more subjects. The failures are then reviewed. It is found that two children were under nine years of age, and that six others had made less than 250 half-day attendances. There are therefore thrown out of consideration five absentees, six irregular attendants, two of tender age, and four classed low (who passed again), leaving 121 expected passes and thirty-nine inexcusable failures. Of the eighty-two passes, one-half were strong passes and the other half weak, a weak pass meaning failure in one subject or weakness in two. In this class, except the inaccuracy in arithmetic and spelling, the general character of the work was fair. The second case is that of a large Fourth Standard class in a district town school. Here sixty-nine names appear on the schedule. None are absent and none are classed low. The class is examined, when all pass in reading, three fail in spelling, all pass in writing, three fail in arithmetic, two in grammar, one in geography, and six in history. All but one pass the standard. The case of failure is reconsidered, and the candidate is found totally deficient in faculty for language, having failed in the same standard and on the same ground last year. Of the sixty-eight passes made, fifty-one were strong and seventeen weak. In this class the general character of the work was excellent.

CLASS SUBJECTS.—Science, drawing, singing, and drill are optional subjects; and there is really nothing to induce a teacher to take up these subjects but a sense of duty. In many cases a teacher is not capable of giving instruction in some of them, and in others no great effort is made to do it. The result is that the work is only well done in a few schools, where the teachers are competent and where some sacrifices of time are made. This better work is mainly, but by no means entirely, confined to the nineteen larger schools in the district. Of course, the instruction in class subjects must necessarily be limited in small schools taught by one teacher. In the larger schools, on the contrary, I think the teaching of one and all these subjects should be made imperative, and sufficient aid afforded to make the instruction thorough. Two years ago I advocated the same thing.

The following is an analysis of the work now taken up in the nineteen larger schools:—

	Number of Schools in which the Instruction is—			
	Good.	Fair.	Weak.	Unattempted.
Elementary science	1	8	7	3
Freehand drawing	5	12	1	1
Singing from notes	6	9	1	3
Military drill	12	3	...	4

All the four subjects are taught in twelve of these schools, three of them in five other schools, and in two schools only one subject (drawing) is attempted. Drawing is now being taught throughout all the classes of most of these larger schools. In science I think a programme of instruction should be issued from time to time, and the experimental instruction in the syllabus should be under the direction of a science-master. Failing any such action on the part of the State, I