

before referred to, for in some schools from one-third to even over one-half of the pupils presented in standards had, on account of this disease, failed to make half the possible number of attendances.

The increase in the percentage of roll-number presented in standards is a pleasing feature of the table. This increase no doubt was chiefly due to the new regulation requiring teachers to give written reasons for the non-presentation in Standard I. of any child eight years old.

In the percentage of failures there is a slight increase—viz., 0.4. This was only to be expected, considering how unfortunate the district was during the year in the way of epidemics. Indeed, it appears to us a matter of congratulation that the percentage of failures is as low as it is, for some schools were closed for many weeks at a time, and others were kept open though over half their pupils were absent.

On the work brought to light by the examinations, exhaustive reports were written in duplicate, one copy being sent to the teacher interested, through his Committee, and the other to the Board. Percentages, as usual, varied very much, but, as hitherto, we formed our judgment rather upon the *quality* of the passes than upon the *number* of the passes, provided, of course, the number was not quite below what might reasonably have been expected when allowance was made for epidemics, &c. In several annual reports on the work done in the district it has been pointed out that percentages are very deceptive. In all examinations there must be some standard fixed beneath which if examinees fall there can be no pass. The line must be drawn somewhere; and it is a fact well known, to examiners at all events, that the difference between the attainments of those candidates just below the line and the attainments of those just above the line must be very little. Now, at some schools obtaining good percentages the majority of the successful pupils were just above the line, while at others with not quite so good percentages the majority were a long way above it. Yet we consider that the school with the slightly-worse percentage had done the better work. Sometimes a teacher of the former kind of school with the higher percentages expresses surprise that the Inspector's written report was not more favourable, because "My percentage was so good"; but the Inspector's view of the matter was that the work of the majority of children, so close was it to the limiting line, just escaped being characterized as poor, while that of none, or of hardly any, could be styled good. Teachers it is who are responsible for the fictitious value put by the public upon percentages. Should their percentages be high, they advertise them in every possible way, and themselves create a false standard for estimating the educational value of the school-work, and make a rod with which to smite their own backs when the percentage for any reason falls.

**INSTRUCTION.**—As for several years exhaustive reports were written on the treatment of every subject in the course, we purpose this year to confine any lengthy remarks under the heading "Instruction" to whatever appears to us of special importance, more particularly to anything connected with the recent changes in the syllabus.

As far as percentages go, there was an improvement for the year in the higher three standards, notably in Standard VI., where the percentage of failures fell as much as 14.4. In the lower three standards the percentage of failures rose—0.7 in Standard III., 2.7 in Standard II., and 3.7 in Standard I. As there was no falling-off in the work of Standard I., the increase in the number of failures was no doubt mainly due to the new regulation requiring all children of eight years of age to be presented for the standard unless sufficient reason can be shown for keeping them another year in the preparatory class.

The number of schools in which *Reading* is well taught gradually increases. In the small schools the practice of grouping two classes is becoming more general, and where this is done the pupils, in consequence, get more actual teaching of reading. We should like to see two books used in each standard during the school-year.

*Spelling*, which was severely condemned in our last report, showed considerable improvement this year; but there is still much to be desired, especially in Standard III.

*Writing* generally was a very strong subject. At many schools the writing and the arrangement on the examination-papers were very fine.

*Arithmetic* varied very much, especially in Standard V., which was seldom a strong class in this subject. In Standard IV. reduction and compound practice often were very poor, owing to pupils being ignorant of their tables. That long measure is one of the tables for Standard III. seemed to be not generally known to teachers. In schools where the discipline and control were weak, so invariably was the arithmetic. If questions were read more carefully, and answers when obtained were compared with the questions, there would be fewer failures in arithmetic. At many schools, however, the arithmetic was excellent.

*Grammar* by the new syllabus was made a "class"-subject in Standards III., V., and VI., being retained as a "pass"-subject in Standard IV. only. We were sorry to find that the subject showed a woful falling-off, especially in Standards V. and VI. Indeed, at more than a few schools the pupils in these two highest standards showed almost utter ignorance of the subject, especially in parsing. Analysis used to be particularly strong in this district, but last year it was quite a common experience to find Standard VI. pupils quite ignorant of analysis of complex sentences, as far as ability to pick out and name clauses was concerned. This is much to be regretted, for in a poorly-inflected language like English the study of its grammar should be begun, and based throughout its course, on the logical relations of the parts of speech (not on their inflexions), or, in other words, on the analysis of sentences. In Standard IV. grammar and composition formerly counted as one "pass"-subject; now they count as two "pass"-subjects. In this standard alone did grammar not deteriorate, while composition showed some improvement. In all standards from Standards III. to VI. composition is now a "pass"-subject by itself. Presumably the object in taking grammar away from composition and relegating it to the "class"-subject list was to improve composition. Granted this, we cannot say that the object has been accomplished, except in Standard III., as far as this district is concerned, for the composition in Standards V. and VI. showed no improvement on that of former years. Paraphrasing was a new feature of Standard V. composition, and it evidently had been