

be supposed, those scholars only who are actually present at an examination, but includes all who are absent from any cause, such as sickness, or even death, provided their names still appear on the school roll. Those scholars are said to be "excepted" who, during the three quarters preceding that in which the examination takes place, have made less than half attendances. The "percentage of passes" simply shows the proportion that the number of passes in standards bears to the total roll number, and is, of course, usually largely affected by the number of children in any given school who are too young for standard work. Taken alone, this is a most fallacious test of the quality of the work done in a school. The "percentage of failures," on the other hand, has reference solely to the standard scholars actually present, and is the column that will inevitably be practically accepted as the measure of success. Broadly speaking, indeed, it may be taken for granted that a school which shows less than 10 per cent. of failures has done well, and that a record of (say) 40 per cent. of failures (a rate that has this year been largely exceeded in several Marlborough schools) stamps a school as being unsuccessful. By the help of this explanation, and by taking a moderate amount of pains, the actual percentage of passes in standards, in any case, may easily be ascertained, it being obvious that 10 per cent. of failures implies the high rate of 90 per cent. of passes. It must further be explained that the percentage on "class subjects" is calculated on quite a different basis, a maximum of 100 marks being allowed for each of the four class subjects, drawing, history, geography, and elementary science; the sum of the marks, divided by four, giving the percentage of passes. For each of the six "additional" subjects a maximum of twenty marks is allowed.

Broadly speaking, it may be safely affirmed that in the majority of the Marlborough schools both "pass" and "class" subjects are fairly well taught. The least satisfactory portions of the work are still, however, reading and writing. One ought not to rest content until the copy books in almost every school show something approaching to the well-formed penmanship that is invariably to be found in a few schools, where the teachers do not grudge the pains without which excellence cannot be attained. It is in the careless teaching of beginners that the mischief usually begins, bad habits being acquired at the earlier stages that it is almost impossible to cure later on.

With the express object of setting free more of the teachers' time for instruction in reading than could formerly be spared, the arithmetic papers have been made easier this year. The results are somewhat disappointing. The general improvement in reading is not so great as might have been expected from the additional facilities that have been given for practice. It is surely not unreasonable to ask that scholars of fourteen or fifteen should leave school so far equipped for the work of after life as to be able to do what few are not called upon to do at some time or other, to read aloud with such fluency, distinctness, and correctness of intonation that they may give pleasure to the sick, the aged, or the blind. It would be well for our teachers to ascertain for themselves how many of their best scholars can face this simple test of efficiency. So far as I have observed, our teachers do not themselves take a sufficient part in the class reading, forgetting how much more effective example is than precept. The younger children read far too little, and their reading matter is too little varied. Boys of eight or nine years old are frequently presented for the First Standard, after having read during the preceding twelve months no more than thirty or forty pages of a single little primer. Properly taught children at this age ought to have got over most of the mechanical difficulties of reading. As it is, I believe, the intention of the Board to undertake the procuring and distribution of a sufficient supply of well selected books, in accordance with my off-repeated recommendations, there will be no excuse for leaving the younger scholars, at least, unprovided with two reading books apiece.

I subjoin a detailed account of the state of each school at the time when it was last examined. Exception has frequently been taken, but, as it seems to me, without sufficient reason, to the publication of these detailed reports. Usually they are treated almost as confidential communications, a knowledge of which is confined to the members of the Education Board, and of the School Committee specially interested in each school. The outside public, therefore, has little or no means of ascertaining what is actually going on in the individual schools, the conduct of which is a matter of vital importance to hundreds of parents outside of the bodies which alone are put in possession of the necessary facts. Mere general statements that certain subjects are being well or ill taught must necessarily be vague, and, to a certain extent, inaccurate, as hardly any broad statements can be equally true of all, or nearly all, the scholars in any district. Nor, on the whole, are the teachers themselves sufferers from the publicity given to the strictures on the conduct of their schools. On the contrary, the harsh, and occasionally unjust, conclusions that would be arrived at, in some instances, from a bare perusal of the record of passes and failures are corrected by the statement of extenuating circumstances, where such can be shown to exist. Irregularity of attendance, long continued and general sickness, and changes of teachers are again and again set forth in the detailed reports as accounting largely for what would otherwise be probably set down to negligence or incapacity. And it is a weighty argument in favour of the publication of detailed reports that an opportunity is thus afforded of doing justice to exceptionally good teachers, whose merit might otherwise be overlooked by all but a few. As for those teachers—the number of whom in this district is now, fortunately, small—who either do not know their business, or, knowing it, will not take the trouble to do it, the wrong that they suffer from publicity does not appear to be very grievous. Either they will mend their ways or they will leave the service. In either case the public will be clearly the gainer. [Here follow reports in detail on the several schools, not reprinted.]

Two sets of tables are annexed giving the result of my examinations in accordance with a form prescribed by the Education Department, in a summary form and in detail. The result of the examination of pupil-teachers is also appended.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Marlborough.

I have, &c.,

W. C. HODGSON, Inspector.