

machinery that would bear hardly on their neighbours for what is generally held to be a comparatively venial offence. Until public opinion is so far educated that it will be held as disgraceful to rob one's children of the education to which they are entitled as to rob them of their daily bread, little amendment in this respect can be looked for.

The Chairman, Board of Education, Marlborough.

I have, &c.,

W. C. HODGSON, Inspector.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	
						Yrs.	mos.
S 7	9	...	...	...	...	...	...
S 6	78	5	...	10	63	14	0
S 5	136	18	8	33	77	13	0
S 4	185	7	13	39	126	12	2
S 3	245	14	13	52	166	10	8
S 2	247	16	25	34	172	9	2
S 1	208	2	9	13	184	8	3
P.	580	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	1,688	62	68	181	788	*	

* Mean of average age, 11·2 years.

NELSON.

SIR,—

Nelson, 31st December, 1888.

I have the honour to submit to you my annual report on the Nelson public schools for 1888.

Eighty-six schools have been examined. Visits of inspection have also been paid to seventy-eight schools, several of these having been inspected twice. On examination day 5,444 scholars were on the roll, 5,054 being present. There were 390 children, 175 of whom belonged to standard classes, absent from examination. For the absence of fully a third of these no satisfactory excuse was given. Taking as a basis the proportion of failures to passes, it is undeniable that our schools, on the whole, have fallen considerably short of the standard reached last year. The percentage of failures has risen from 14·4 to 22·7—more than a third. Without laying undue stress upon the standard test, it is clear that any school where more than 40 per cent. of the candidates for standards fail to show the minimum of attainment required by the regulations is in sorry case; but in twenty-four of our schools the failures range from 40 to 100 per cent., a full third more approaching closely the lower of these two numbers. In several instances I have set down recent changes in the teaching staff as an extenuating circumstance, but not without misgivings, as it is obvious that this kind of apology must not be pressed too far. If it comes to be generally accepted that the departure of a fairly capable teacher a few weeks before the examination is to result, almost as a matter of course, in the falling to pieces of his past work, it will assuredly become a question whether work of so fragile and ephemeral a kind is of much practical value. Nor is it exactly the duty of an examiner to be constantly racking his brains in search of almost undiscoverable excuses for blank failure—excuses, it may be added, that are rarely, if ever, needed by those who really understand their business.

It affords me much pleasure to be able to record a marked and very general improvement in the two subjects to which special and most unfavourable reference was made in last year's report—reading and writing. It will be remembered that I found it necessary to condemn in strong terms the inefficient manner in which these all-important arts were being taught in a large proportion of our country schools, and that a distinct warning was given that a severer test would be applied in future. The warning has evidently been taken to heart in all but those few instances where all warnings are thrown away. In spite of the stringency of the new test, no more than 143 out of 3,746 standard scholars have fallen short of what was required of them in reading, the number of those whose handwriting was condemned being only 101. It is not too much to assert that if the same tests had been applied to last year's work the number of failures would have been far more than doubled. As it was in the junior classes that the deficiencies in reading and writing were most marked, so it is in these same classes that the greatest improvement has been effected. It must not, however, be inferred that the highest degree of excellence attainable by the application of even a moderate amount of skill and industry to the teaching of these two subjects has yet been reached. Some, indeed, of the most obvious means that I have repeatedly pointed out as lying at the very foundation of success are still systematically disregarded. Comparatively few schools, for instance, are even yet supplied with what has been for some time insisted on in England—two alternative reading books; while the grouping of words, without which the true sense of a passage is quite undiscoverable by a listener, is still insufficiently attended to. The