

cent., failed to reach the requirements. In the thirty-five schools where Standards I. and II. were examined by the teachers there were 1,401 pupils in the two lowest classes, and the failures were 148, or 10·5 per cent. of the whole, and of these more than half came from the Napier School alone. Here “freedom of classification” by teachers is clearly in favour of sending forward the children at a more rapid rate and on a lower standard test than I have hitherto been willing to recognise. If, however, thoroughness is to be the criterion of work, I am satisfied that the influx of unprepared children into the higher standards will have a prejudicial effect upon the standards in years to come, and I caution the teachers as to the risks they run with this power of free classification in their hands.

A second important change in the standard examination has been the introduction of arithmetical tests issued by the central department to the Inspectors to be used in the examination of all pupils above Standard II. This innovation is a good one. It certainly saves a large amount of time in the preparation of questions, and I am satisfied also that it will have a good effect upon the tone of the schools and the more thorough preparation of the pupils. Under the new plan I have found several schools unexpectedly break down in arithmetic, especially in Standards V and VI., but on the whole the results have given proof that the subject receives much careful attention. As so often pointed out, those schools where mental arithmetic is strong find little difficulty in working the ordinary pass tests, and I regret that mental arithmetic does not form a part of the pass work in this important subject. Few subjects, it seems to me, provide a better intellectual training, and its practical application to the needs of daily life is of too much value to be neglected among a people given largely to business pursuits.

The extra time which the new regulations have made available to Inspectors has been much appreciated by me personally, but I am doubtful whether education will benefit by the change. No one conversant with the routine of examination as at present carried on but must have felt that the objects to be gained by individual examination could be reached just as rapidly and effectively by the adoption of simpler and more rational methods. The non-examination of Standards I. and II. in pass-subjects has diminished my actual pass-work by one-fifth, but the examinations are still the same for the children, and increased duties have actually been imposed upon head teachers. Over-examination has done, and still does, much harm to both teachers and children. True educative processes have had to give way in the schools to the necessities of examinations, and mind training and mind growth are neglected for the more showy but less effective methods now so common in the schools. Teachers rather than examiners are wanted, and, whilst I do not doubt the capacity of teachers to exercise fair judgment in the examination of their pupils, it is a cause for regret that the services of all the best teachers should be forcibly withdrawn from their more important school duties simply to supply tabulations such as an ordinary inspection could furnish in a few minutes.

Respecting the character of the work done in the schools, my separate reports will have already informed you. In very few instances is there evidence of neglect or of careless preparation on the part of teachers. I find, however, a great tendency among them to run in grooves, and the instruction often becomes dry and unattractive. During inspection visits, when methods are studied and inquiry is made as to the character and kind of instruction and of its bearing upon the condition of the school, I am often led to the opinion that the junior teachers are more methodical in the preparation of their work than are the seniors. The “standard lesson-books” which are kept by the junior teachers for my inspection may account for this, but an instruction should hardly be necessary to show senior teachers that similar books should be kept by them if they would become educators, as well as teachers, of the young. Reading is not taught with the intelligence one could wish where so much in life’s pleasures depends upon the power of grasping what is to be found in books and in the public Press. I have pointed out again and again that intelligent reading must begin in the infant school, and for this reason the best and most capable teachers are wanted there to make the work sure in anticipation of the standard course. Many errors are still common—errors in emphasis, in modulation, and in the correct sounding of words—and most of these are traceable to imperfect teaching in the junior classes. Young and inexperienced teachers are incapable of conducting any of the higher aspects of training in this subject, and the trained staff in the larger schools must take this duty upon themselves if reading is to occupy its proper place in school work. Writing continues to be fairly taught in many schools, but it is a subject that receives less direct attention from teachers than any other pass-subject. This is to be regretted, for much of the stiff handwriting so common among school-children is the direct result of bad methods and imperfect supervision. Freedom and legibility are the two essentials in good handwriting, and pupils in the two highest standards should be trained in their school work with these ends in view. On the whole, drawing is making satisfactory progress. The regulation permitting the exemption of girls in geometrical drawing has been claimed by most teachers. Personally I am sorry for this, but the teachers say the boys take geometrical drawing whilst the girls are sewing, and the latter is looked upon as an equivalent for the girls. Geography continues to be well taught, and there is no subject of the syllabus that gives me more satisfaction than this one. Composition is prepared with growing success, but I am hardly satisfied that the best methods are adopted in the higher classes. I have recommended for Standards V and VI. that a library-book or other be read either weekly or fortnightly by the pupils, and that a paraphrase or summary be made in an exercise-book kept for the purpose. I have seen this plan adopted with excellent results, and I shall be glad to see it followed in all schools where there are any pupils in Standards V and VI.

The class-subjects include grammar, history, mental arithmetic, elementary science, and object-lessons. Grammar is not taught as it used to be when a pass-subject, but the improvement in composition is ample compensation. Recitation is taken by all schools except Clive, and in most of them the results are good. Drill is taught in twenty schools only. This does not include the schools that take the purposeless exercises sometimes classed as drill, but military drill as applied to