

INSPECTORS' REPORT ON "ST. JOSEPH'S PROVIDENCE" NATIVE SCHOOL,  
WELLINGTON.

Wellington,

March 2, 1860.

SIR,—Having accepted the invitation of His Excellency the Governor to inspect and report upon the Native School called "St Joseph's Providence," at Wellington, we proceeded upon the 27th day of February, pursuant to arrangement with the Right Reverend P. T. Viard, the Roman Catholic Bishop, three days previously, to view the premises, examine the scholars, and obtain information with respect to all the matters which are indicated by the 11th section of "Native Schools Act, 1858," as the subjects to be reported upon by the Inspectors; and we now have the honor of presenting the following Report to His Excellency, containing the results of our inspection and inquiry :—

St. Joseph's Providence was founded in 1852 for the education of female children of the Native race, or of half-castes (being orphans, or the children of indigent parents), in the Roman Catholic faith, and with the special view of qualifying them for the vocation of domestic servants. The numbers who have received instruction and maintenance in the school since the Report made in 1857 are stated in the accompanying document marked A, which was kindly furnished to us by Bishop Viard.

We found in the school 14 girls, whom we examined separately; but 19 appear on the books of the school for the year last past, of whom 4, as we were informed, were absent for vacation, and one had recently been taken into domestic service.

Following the directions of the Act, we have to report first upon the nature of the instruction given in the school, the attainments of the pupils, and their progress.

The secular intellectual instruction of the school comprises the ordinary subjects of primary English education in the English language (see section 9 of the Act), namely, reading, spelling, and writing, and the first three rules of arithmetic; and we have much pleasure in expressing our opinion that in each of those branches the instruction afforded is of the best quality.

The reading of the more advanced scholars, which was conducted *ad aperturam libri*, was remarkable for clearness and precision, the spelling was unusually correct, and the writing from dictation strikingly good.

The industrial training of the pupils comprises general needlework, making clothes, marking, washing, and ironing, cooking, cleaning, and general house work, as indicated in the document A annexed.

The whole work of the establishment is done by the pupils, with the assistance and under the eye of the teachers, and there is no hired person—except a man who occasionally works in the garden—employed upon the premises.

The Native children are fond of needlework, and though at first deficient in habits of domestic order, they soon conform to the rules of the house, and acquire the necessary skill for housework.

The elder pupils have also received some instructions in singing.

The attainments of the children, considering their respective ages, seem to us to be very creditable to themselves and their teachers; and their progress must have been rapid, seeing that none of them had received any instruction before they were received into the school.

The document B hereto annexed is a list of the girls whose names appear on the books of the school for the past year, with the date of their admission and their probable age at that date.

The next matters to which our attention was directed were food and clothing.

We were informed that there was no specific dietary for the children, but that they have as much plain and nourishing food as they desire, and that they have animal food every day of the week except Fridays and during the fasts of their Church, for which times an ample supply of fish is provided.

They are plainly but neatly and, so far as we could judge, comfortably dressed, in a uniform manner.

With respect to cleanliness and health, the persons of the scholars and their clothes, their dormitories and the whole of the premises seemed to be most scrupulously clean.

The ventilation is abundant, and there is a well on the premises, and a sufficient supply of water in the immediate neighbourhood; the situation seems most salubrious, and the necessary conveniences are at a proper distance from the house, and on a lower level; and there has been no case of sickness in the school during the past year or for sometime before.

The buildings and the land next claim our attention.

The buildings consist of one main building, containing a school room, a refectory, a pantry, and a kitchen, on the ground-floor, with a small chapel and a gallery containing sixteen separate dormitories for the children, and two for the teachers upstairs.

There is a washing and drying-house attached, and there are other offices.

The whole of the premises are in excellent repair, and were perfectly clean.

There is an acre of land well enclosed, which comprises an ample playground, an orchard, and a kitchen garden.

The concluding subjects on which it is our duty to report are the discipline, the management, and the efficiency of the school.

As to discipline, we were informed that no mode of punishment is adopted, none being found necessary, and the children being very obedient. Their demeanour in our presence during a protracted examination was most respectful, orderly, cheerful, and generally satisfactory.