

apparent, for the express purpose of observing the method of teaching this subject, and of suggesting improvements where necessary.

Geography.—There are more failures in this subject than were recorded last year, but it must not be forgotten that the classes were all examined in the subjects of their own programme, and in the case of the third classes the work was done upon paper for the first time. This was in one or two instances made the excuse for the absence of any answer, but in every case where this was pleaded I questioned some of the children, and could seldom obtain an oral answer, showing that it was ignorance of the subject and not the embarrassment of pen and ink that caused the failure. The Greymouth and Hokitika papers on this subject were quite as good as at the last examination.

Grammar.—There are fewer failures in this than in any other subject in the programme, and some of the papers of the upper classes are very good.

History.—This subject has also improved, especially in the larger schools, there being only fifteen with less than half marks in the Greymouth School, and only twelve in the Hokitika School.

Sewing.—This indispensable branch of female education is taught with more or less success at all schools having one, or more than one, female assistant. The number of marks awarded for this subject being small, I have not included them in the maximum number for the standards, which would necessitate a different calculation for boys and girls, but the marks obtained by the girls for sewing go towards neutralizing the loss of marks they may be supposed to sustain through being withdrawn from the ordinary work of their classes during the hours devoted to needlework. There are numbers of girls attending schools without any female teacher, who are not at present receiving any instruction in this branch, and for whom some provision should be made. Woodstock, Blue Spur, Upper Crossing, Arahura Road, Greenstone, Marsden, Maori Gully, and Paroa are cases in point. I have to thank those ladies who kindly undertook to examine the sewing in the larger schools, thus saving me much valuable time, and encouraging alike the teachers and the taught, by taking an active interest in this department of the public-school programme. It is a common complaint with teachers that they cannot get the girls to bring any work to school, and that the requirements of this portion of the programme cannot be properly complied with. When this is the case to any serious extent, I would suggest that the Local Committees should purchase material, and have it made up into some saleable articles, which should be disposed of so as to reimburse the Committee's outlay and perhaps in some cases leave a margin of profit which might serve as a fund for purchasing a sewing machine, in the use of which the elder girls might be instructed. At the Greymouth and Hokitika schools the introduction of a sewing machine would be a great boon, provided that it be not allowed to interfere in any way with the instruction in hand sewing.

Two fresh subjects have taken their places upon the programme since my last report, namely, mental arithmetic and English composition, and in both a fair percentage of the pupils examined made a creditable number of marks.

The general result of this examination as a whole is, I think, satisfactory, if the fact that so many children have been advanced two standards be not lost sight of; as, though many of these are described as failing, they have actually made fair progress since December, 1876. If we refer to the Board report for the year ending 31st December, 1875, we shall see that very satisfactory and encouraging progress has been made during the last two years. At that time there were only twenty-one schools in existence in Westland, five of which were denominational schools. There are now thirty schools, three of which are denominational. The total daily average attendance was 1,400. The daily average attendance for the quarter ending 31st December was about 1,900, the number on the roll being about 2,716, while, with respect to the quality of the instruction imparted, it is very doubtful whether there were at that time half a dozen children in the province who could have passed a satisfactory examination in the Fourth Standard: judging from the results of my preliminary examination of the schools in July, 1875, I should say decidedly not.

In the matter of school management and discipline, the improvement is quite as marked, while the wise liberality of the Board has provided school buildings which will compare favourably with any schools of their class in extent of accommodation, convenience of arrangement, and in the important particulars of lighting and ventilation, while some are buildings of considerable architectural merit.

It is much to be desired that the Board could see its way to build residences, at all events, for the principal teacher of every school. The allowance at present paid to teachers represents the interest of a sum of money more than sufficient to pay for their erection, and in many places the teachers have great difficulty in finding anything like suitable dwellings for their families. The amount now paid annually in this district, as house allowance, represents, at $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., a capital of about £7,500.

HIGHER EDUCATION.

The subject of higher education has engaged the attention of the Board on several occasions since my last annual report.

Acting on instructions received, I prepared, in July last, an amended programme in which certain other subjects specified by the Board were introduced, but, as you are aware, I was afterwards permitted to exercise my own discretion as to its immediate adoption, and I therefore postponed any alteration of the programme, believing the work already undertaken for the current year to be more than sufficient for the time then remaining for its accomplishment.

In my opinion any attempt to combine secondary education with primary in our State schools will result in a loss to the latter, without any corresponding gain in the former. The great majority of the scholars in the State schools leave before they have passed the Fifth Standard, and up to the present time very few indeed have remained to enter the Seventh, and it is to be feared that any addition to the programme of the kind proposed would have a tendency to reduce the numbers so remaining. The introduction of higher subjects, such as mathematics, Latin, &c., could only be effected in a few of the principal schools, and in these an increase in the staff would be necessary, unless some portion of the present programme were struck out. If the latter alternative were adopted primary education would suffer, and, if the former, considerable expense would be incurred