

expression—qualities in which it formerly too often fell short. In comparatively few schools is now heard the dreary monotone in prose reading, although the unpleasant unvarying swing in the repetition of poetry is still too common. Spelling, which is tested by words written on slates in the two lowest standards, and by dictation exercises in the others, continues to be particularly accurate. Writing now receives much greater attention than formerly, and there is a very noticeable improvement. I could name a few schools, however, in which this branch is still left very much to chance. Exercise books frequently show a want of sufficient supervision. Shorter exercises with stricter criticism would be advantageous. There are exceptional cases in which these books are all that could be expected. Object-lessons have received more or less attention in nearly all the schools—in a very few only have no time and place been found for them. With few exceptions they were not very successfully given; but this is not very surprising, when what is involved in them and the difficulty of presenting them satisfactorily to the minds of young children are taken into consideration. More acquaintance with their nature and aim, and more experience in dealing with them will lead to improvement. These lessons are certainly worthy of being systematically practised, for they form an excellent means of training, both to teachers and scholars, and will amply repay any pains bestowed upon them. The increase of knowledge, though an accompaniment, is not their aim, which is rather the cultivation of all in a child that will enable him to acquire knowledge. Their use is to lead to habits of sustained attention for longer or shorter periods, to the exercise of all the senses or powers of observation, to the ability to form comparisons, and to trace similarities and contrasts, and to the use of the reason and judgment. To accomplish all these and more besides the lessons required to be carefully graduated to the age and abilities of the children, but this is not often the case. Their arrangement of parts should be such as to lead the pupils to anticipate what was to follow, so that much telling might be avoided. The teacher's manner should be pleasing and animated, so that close attention might be secured and sufficient impression made. A good test of the success of these lessons is the continued interest and attention of the pupils; if these are not generally secured the lesson is a failure. Lessons on science might be treated like object-lessons, the subjects being so arranged and simplified that the pupils might have no difficulty in receiving and assimilating them.

The teaching of singing and drawing is becoming more general; but in the schools I examined the effects are not very impressive save in a few instances. In most of the large schools these subjects, and also industrial work, receive sufficient attention, and the results are satisfactory.

In conclusion, I have to express the opinion that a reasonable and satisfactory amount of progress has been made during the past year, notwithstanding the considerable changes in and additions to the school course. The work of examination has been no light task, and the work of preparing the schools for examination has, I am sure, been no lighter, and it is only owing to the skill and diligence of the large body of the teachers that it is so satisfactory as it is.

I have, &c.,

WM. TAYLOR,

Inspector of Schools.

The Secretary to the Education Board, Otago.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Invercargill, 20th February, 1880.

I have the honor to forward my general report for the year 1879.

During the year new schools have been opened at South Invercargill, North Invercargill, Gladstone, South Forest Hill, Ryal Bush, Lumsden, Fairlight, Otatara Bush, Knapdale, and Elderslie. At Riverton the old schoolhouse has been replaced by a commodious and handsome new one, and several schools have been altered and refurnished in accordance with the most approved plans. I have had no opportunity of comparing our new school-buildings with those of other education districts in New Zealand, but I do not hesitate to say that they do not suffer by comparison with those of the sister colony Victoria. Many of the school-grounds are now fenced; but few of the teachers, I regret to say, cultivate a garden, or otherwise utilize the school glebe. There is a refreshing exception at Waianiwa, where the teacher, Mr. Rowe, has spared neither money nor labour to ornament both the school-ground and the schoolhouse. His school is a model of neatness, and does him great credit. It is painful to have to complain of the filthy state of some of our schools and outbuildings. Very liberal allowances are made to Committees for the purpose of meeting the cost of cleaning the school-buildings and premises, and therefore the dirt and filth of which I have had too often to complain are utterly inexcusable. The schoolroom should be swept every evening, and the furniture dusted every morning; and once a month, at the least, the school floor, furniture, and out-offices should be thoroughly scrubbed.

Along the Mataura Valley, north of Gore, the Waimea Plains, the Oreti Plains, and that large extent of country lying between Otama and Otaraia, settlement is advancing so rapidly that, to supply the educational wants of the settlers, the resources of the Board will, for some years to come, be taxed to the uttermost.

Most of the schools are now tolerably well supplied with maps, ball-frames, and reading-cards; and quite recently arrangements have been made for the supply of properly-made black-boards and easels.

The school at Stewart Island, and three others that were closed when I was in their neighbourhood, have been visited only once, and three schools recently opened not at all. All the rest have been visited at least twice—seventeen, three times; four, four times; and the town schools all several times. In the discharge of my duties I have travelled 3,968 miles, and made 141 visits of inspection.

Number of pupils examined in the standards	...	...	2,031
Number that passed fully according to Regulation 8	...	...	853
Number presented in the First Class* (not fit to be examined in Standard I.)	...	...	1,331

* This class is always tested, and the result recorded in the report sent to the teacher. Average age of this class—7 years 9 months.