

HAWKE'S BAY.

1. MR. HILL'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Education Office, Napier, 31st December, 1880.

I have the honor to submit my general report upon the results of the annual examination of the schools and upon the progress of education in this district for the year ending the 31st December, 1880. Thirty-six schools are now under my inspection, 5 of which have been added during the year, viz., Blackburn, Makaretu, Makatoko, Mohaka, and Waerengahika. In a number of places where schools are conducted, as at Waerengahika, Te Arai, and Patutahi, in the Cook County, Mohaka and Tarawera, in the Wairoa County, Te Aute, in the Hawke's Bay County, and Te Ongaonga, Tamumu, and Takapau, in the Waipawa County, no schoolhouses are provided by the Board, although the average attendance in the buildings used for school purposes warrants the erection of a suitable school-house in each of these places. In all the large centres of population ample accommodation has been provided for the children attending the schools, with the exception of Napier and Ormondville, where the schoolhouses are full to overflowing. Of the 36 schoolhouses, 19 are provided with teachers' residences. All the schoolhouses and the majority of the teachers' residences, which are the property of the Board, are in good order and repair, as are also the school appliances.

TEACHING STAFF.—Throughout the schools of the district 28 certificated, 23 uncertificated, and 26 pupil-teachers are engaged, together with 8 sewing mistresses. Twelve of the uncertificated teachers are in charge of schools. The average number of children to each teacher employed by the Board, omitting the sewing mistresses, was slightly in excess of 29. In 1879 the average number of pupils to each teacher was 32.4, and for the schools of the colony 33.1. It will thus be seen that the teaching staff in the schools, compared with the average attendance, is relatively greater than in some of the other education districts.

ATTENDANCE.—The attendance at the schools continues to increase. At the beginning of the year 2,388 children were entered as belonging to the district schools. During the year 2,037 children were admitted and 1,340 left, so that on the 31st December there were 3,085 children actually attending the schools under the Board. Of this number, 160, or 5 per cent., were under 5 years of age; 772, or 25 per cent., were between 5 and 7; 1,040, or 33.6 per cent., were between 7 and 10; 855, or 27.6 per cent., were between 10 and 13 years; 232, or 7.8 per cent., were between 13 and 15 years; and 26, or 9 per cent., were over 15 years of age. In 1879 the average number of children on the school registers throughout the district was 2,322, and the average attendance at the schools 1,807; but in the year just ended the average number of children on the school registers was 2,980, and the average attendance 2,240, showing an increase of 658, or 28.4 per cent., in the number on the roll, and of 433, or 24 per cent., in the average attendance, when compared with those of last year. All the schools have been visited and examined by me, in accordance with the Government requirements. The following table gives the number of children of each sex presented for examination in each standard, the number who passed the standard, and the percentage of passes compared with the total number on the school registers. For the purpose of comparison I have also given the number of children who passed in each standard in 1879:—

1880.	Presented.			Passed.			Percentage of Passes.	Passed in 1879.		
Standards.	M.	F.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.		M.	F.	Total.
I.	285	263	548	199	174	373	12.4	228	201	429
II.	257	258	515	176	158	334	11.1	224	166	390
III.	158	151	309	104	103	207	6.9	95	94	189
IV.	90	62	152	53	40	93	3.1	43	22	65
V.	25	11	36	19	6	25	0.83	...	...	...
VI.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Total ...	815	745	1,560	551	481	1,032	34.33	590	483	1,073

No pupils were examined in the Sixth Standard. Such results as these require further explanations. I pointed out, in my report for 1879, that there were 52 per cent. of the children in the district schools who had not passed the First or lowest Standard, and that actually 22 per cent. of those who could not do so were children above seven years of age. I regret to say the number of those who have not passed Standard I. has actually increased during the past year, and that this increase, representing increased ignorance to be dealt with, is chiefly made up of children who are above seven years of age. There were 3,005 children attending the schools at the date of my examination, and from the table showing the number presented and passed in each standard it will be seen that 1,032 passed the standard requirements. If it is considered that all those children presented in a standard higher than the first had previously passed one of the standards, and that 373 children passed Standard I. last year, it will be found that 1,385 children were capable of passing, and 1,620 were incapable of passing, in one of the standards when my examinations were held during the December quarter in this year. It must not be supposed that the 1,620 incapable children were too young to be examined. I have already shown that the number of children below seven years of age attending school on the 31st December was little more than 900; it therefore follows that about 700 children above seven years of age, or 23 per cent. of the total number in the district schools, were unable at the close of the year to read words of one syllable, to write down on a slate the small letters of the alphabet, and to add together numbers of not more than three figures—a knowledge of which is required to pass Standard I.