

Standards.				No. Presented.	No. Passed.	Average Age.	Percentage.	No. of Schools at which Pupils were successful.
Standard	VI.	...	...	68	40	Yrs. mos. 14 3	58	15
	V.	...	...	215	126	13 4	58	29
	IV.	...	...	463	248	12 6	53	36
	III.	...	...	962	585	11 7	60	52
	II.	...	...	940	665	10 1	70	59
	I.	...	...	1,032	934	8 9	90	61
Totals ...				3,680	2,598	—	70	—

From the foregoing table it will be seen that, except in the case of the Second Standard, the percentages of passes are somewhat higher than in the preceding year. This is satisfactory, and indicates a steady improvement in the efficiency of the schools and the quality of the instruction; and especially so, as in several schools the teaching had been seriously interrupted by sickness, repairs, and other causes, which tended to lower the quantity of the results. Many teachers in my districts deserve the highest praise for the conscientious and able manner in which they have performed their duties under all difficulties. It cannot, however, be denied that there are some schools where the teachers' inefficiency or want of energy has retarded the progress of the children and kept the standards lower than they would be under fairly competent management. At the same time it would be wrong to infer that the teachers must needs be incompetent when only the lower standards are represented at the annual examinations. The schools at Little Akaloa, Governor's Bay South, Duvauchelle's Bay, Wakanui, Tinwald, and Alford Forest (side) were in a very backward state at the time I examined them, and it is to be hoped that the changes made in the teachers of the last five mentioned will lead to better work being done in the future. The Inspector of the Nelson District in his last annual report makes some very pertinent remarks on the removal of notoriously incompetent teachers, and, on behalf of those children who are unfortunate enough to be intrusted to their charge, he writes as follows: "But the question has another side. Who is to compensate the unfortunate children for the irrevocable years wasted, for the opportunities lost, for the bad habits formed, that may affect the whole of their future lives? It is an easy matter to win a cheap reputation for good nature at the expense of justice to that part of the community which is least able to protect itself."

The permission to re-present children in the standards previously passed was not taken advantage of to any great extent in the schools examined by me. I find, on looking through last year's examination schedules, that 187 scholars were so presented, 64 of these being noted in the columns for remarks as mentally incapable. In making out the table for the results of examination in standards no account was taken of scholars re-presented, their names being included among those not presented for examination in standards. As a rule, the teachers of those schools in which children were presented for re-examination completely ignored the fact that when they are permitted to re-present they are also expected to reinstruct. In my opinion the permission given in the note to section 2 of the regulations is unwise and unnecessary, and will tend to still further complicate the teaching and examining of our schools. It is, in my opinion, ridiculous to give this permission to teachers, and at the same time to expect Inspectors to pay any attention to the recommendation contained in section 8. I am quite sure that there is not an Inspector in New Zealand who would expect children mentally incapable and grossly irregular in their attendance to pass a standard each year. Section 3 of the regulations says: "In all cases the scholars presented for any standard must be prepared to show proficiency in the work also of the lower standards," and this, it seems to me, provides a sufficient safeguard against children being placed in classes with the work of which they are unable to keep pace. My experience has proved to me that it is a simple waste of time to examine children who attend school two days out of five in the work of the standard already passed, or, indeed, in that of any standard. The best plan, as I pointed out in my last report, would be to define the number of attendances necessary to be made in order to entitle a scholar to be presented in a standard higher than that previously passed, it being at the same time optional with the teacher whether he presented any who had not made the required attendances.

The sets of papers prepared by me for the higher standards were designedly made a little easier than in the previous year, but, as in every case greater accuracy was required in order to secure a pass, I think I am justified in stating that the conditions of the examinations were, on the whole, similar to those of 1880. In such schools as Gloucester Street, Sydenham, Ashburton, and Lower Heathcote the examination of all standards above the second was conducted almost wholly on paper. While not claiming for a written examination the property of being the best test of a teacher's methods of instruction, or of a child's attainments, it is, in the case of large schools, the most practicable. With carefully-prepared papers, and proper supervision during examination, it is, I think, quite possible to form in this way a just estimate of the work being done in a school. In the majority of small schools a considerable portion of the time at my disposal was devoted to oral questioning, and in every case I endeavoured to make my questions as practical as possible, and to indicate to the teacher the line that he should take in teaching the different subjects. It may not be unnecessary for me here to state that it has always been my custom to spend some portion of time in examining the classes below Standard I.

Nearly all the essential subjects of instruction have been taught more successfully than in former years. Improvement is most noticeable in dictation, arithmetic, grammar, and geography. Reading, writing, and history continue to be the most unsatisfactory subjects. The writing in most of our schools is indifferent, and in a few it is simply disgraceful; and this is due in a great measure to what I have heard called the "exercise-book mania." It is quite common to see children who scarcely know their letters in possession of exercise-books. I should like to see a regulation made that no child