

The proportion of presentments to the roll-number last year was 2·4 per cent. less than that for the previous year, which was 51 per cent.

The proportion of children at all the schools that passed some standard was 35·1 per cent. of the number presented. The corresponding proportion for the previous year was 37·4, or 2·3 per cent. higher. There is a falling-off in the percentages of passes in the Districts of Auckland, Taranaki, Wanganui, Marlborough, Westland, and Otago, and an increase to a greater or less extent in those for Wellington, Nelson, South Canterbury, and Southland. There is scarcely any change in the percentages of the Hawke's Bay and the North Canterbury Districts. In connection with this subject Mr. O'Sullivan makes the following statement in his report: "It will be seen that the percentage of passes is smaller than that of last year. This is due to more than one cause. A somewhat more stringent test was applied: it was judged that the time had arrived for doing this. Some of the schools did not stand the test. The great amount of sickness which prevailed last year caused irregularity of attendance, which seriously disarranged many of the schools, and, of course, hindered their efficiency. I have thought it right not to lower our requirements in order to run a race for results with other districts. I have no doubt that before long we shall reap the benefit of this. Notwithstanding the percentage of passes, I am satisfied that the efficiency of the schools has decidedly increased during the year. The rules adopted by the Board in September last, in reference to the sending up of pupils for standards, came into force on the 1st January last.* These rules will have a beneficial effect, and will help to prevent abuse. Their tendency will be, however, to lessen the percentage of passes. I should be glad to follow the system pursued in South Canterbury, where every child in a school is sent up. The large numbers at some of our schools would make that almost impracticable here, but perhaps we may be able to adopt some modification of it before long." Messrs. Edge and Cumming, North Canterbury, report on the same subject as follows: "Although there is a considerable increase in the amount of candidates presented for examination in the four higher standards, yet there is a slight falling-off in the percentages gained in these standards. A far greater number of schools than was formerly the case are now attempting the work of the higher and more difficult standards, and in some of these the teachers have as yet failed to understand the full amount and quality of what is demanded to secure a pass. Under all the circumstances the results, at least so far as regards the majority of the schools in the district, may be considered fairly creditable. In too many schools the inferior results are undoubtedly due either to the irregular attendance or to the frequent changing of teachers. In the case of some few schools the low percentages gained do not admit of any satisfactory explanation: the requirements for passing, although somewhat different from previous years, have not been perceptibly raised, and the failures can therefore be attributed only to the want of thoroughness in the teaching and to injudicious classification. The children presented in Standards II. and I. were, with comparatively few exceptions, carefully and intelligently prepared for such work as they attempted." Mr. Smith, Westland, reports: "The percentages of passes in the First and Second Standards this year are 18 and 29 less respectively than those gained in 1881, and in the Third Standard 14 less. In the first two cases the result is no more than the increased difficulty of the examination will account for, and the falling-off in the Third clearly indicates the necessity that existed for the stricter examination in Standard II." Mr. Hammond states that "in percentage of passes the years 1879 and 1880 gave far better results than the past two years; that this is principally accounted for by the fact that, when the standards were

* Circular issued by the Auckland Board: "Head teachers are informed that after 1st January, 1883, they must be guided in sending up their pupils for examination by the following instructions. Teachers should understand that these instructions are not meant to induce cramming. It is recognized that their operation will have the effect of causing a smaller percentage of passes to be shown than would be shown were full discretion as to sending up pupils left to the teacher:—Regulation 1. No child shall be kept back from the examination for Standard I. who has made 250 attendances at any district school since the date of the last standard examination of the school he is attending, and who has reached the age of eight years. Regulation 2. Every child who has passed a standard must be presented for a higher one at the next examination, provided he has in the meantime made 250 attendances at any district school. Note.—It is necessary to make this proviso to prevent the absurdity of a child being kept back who has made a large number of attendances at some district school within the prescribed period."