

Even in the town district there are on an average 120 children (whose names are on the rolls) about the streets and elsewhere every day during school hours, to say nothing of those who ought to be scholars. I have also to remark strongly against the practice of pupils absenting themselves on days appointed for examinations, though warned to attend. This practice is remarked upon by other Inspectors, and has, I regret to say, occurred in the town schools, as well as some country schools, where, owing to bad roads and worse weather, there was some excuse for it. As the Board has not come to any decision on the suggestions already submitted to them to put an end to this irregularity of attendance, I have thought of another plan, which within the last few days I find Mr. Inspector Hodgson, of Nelson, has partially adopted—viz., that no pupil who has not attended at least 260 half-days, or twenty-six school weeks, since the last examination, shall be entitled to a certificate of merit.

As no alteration has been made in the regulations enabling the teachers to devote Fridays to repetition lessons only, I have, as a temporary measure, directed the teachers, where they can get home lessons done, to make them consist of such lessons. In no case do I wish any child to be occupied for more than an hour and a half at most with their home lessons; but this I find objected to, as in so many cases the children are wanted to assist their parents.

Reading in some cases is greatly improved, but in those cases where the schools have been partially closed during this year there is little, if any, improvement, being little more than the utterance of sound without any notion of the meaning of the words.

Writing from dictation is greatly improved, and in some cases very good. Writing is still unsatisfactory, though on the whole I think there is a general tendency to improvement. The copy-books are much cleaner and better kept; there are fewer blots and less scribbling on the backs.

Arithmetic has been fairly taught on the whole, but there is throughout all the schools a great want of power of thought in working out questions. Almost universally the problems can be worked out if the pupils are set a-going; but that is not what I require. I want proof of thinking power, and correctness: without the latter the work is worse than useless, for it engenders a slovenly habit of thought. I have had occasion to advise some of your teachers not to hurry their pupils on beyond the requirements of the standards. It has been the cause of much disappointment to the pupils and myself. I am glad to say, however, that mental arithmetic is very carefully taught, and the answers given promptly and correctly.

Grammar is somewhat improved in written matter. Parsing was not so good as I expected. Letter-writing has at last begun to improve, and in some of the schools very creditable essays, though too short, were presented on given topics.

Geography is the subject best taught throughout the schools. The improvement in map-drawing is very marked, and some of those drawn from memory are very good.

History is very little studied except in the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Standards: in the two last I require it; but, where there is so much to be taught of more immediate importance, I have thought it advisable to allow history to be used as a reading-lesson only. Mr. Mill suggested that "History is one of the branches of human knowledge which had best be left to private cultivation."

The record of passes will make it appear that in some schools I have passed a larger percentage of pupils than in former years. It has been caused by the teachers abstaining from the attempt to force pupils through the standards, and thinking that because a pupil has passed one standard he must necessarily be presented the following year in the next.

The Chairman, Education Board.

I have, &c.,
W. M. CROMPTON, Inspector.

WANGANUI.

SIR,—

Wanganui, 27th February, 1883.

I have the honour to lay before you my general and detailed report on the schools examined by me for the year ended the 31st December, 1882.

At the outset I remark—(1.) That, since I last had the honour of addressing you in a general and detailed report, the geographical limits of my district have been somewhat extended. I have had assigned to me the new County of Hawera. My circuit now extends from the River Waikanae on the south to the top of Mount Egmont on the north, and includes the Counties of Manawatu, Rangitikei, Wanganui, Patea, and Hawera. The bi-annual inspection of such a wide district involves much fatigue, anxiety, and expense, attendant upon incessant travel on horseback, as comparatively little use can be made of the railway. In the course of the year I have travelled upwards of 2,600 miles on official duty. To visit the two schools at the extremities of my district, in compliance with the Education Act, I have to travel 744 miles. (2.) That, in addition to official work connected with the annual examination of teachers, pupil-teachers, scholarships examination, and heavy office work, I managed to make "surprise visits" to all the schools under inspection. I regret that these visits, from their educational importance, are not more frequent and more prolonged. (3.) That between the 24th August and the 21st December the examinations in all the schools were completed (without hitch), except Taonui, Sandridge, and Oroua Bridge. The two former were closed at the time of my visits, and the latter newly started. (4.) That the examination-schedules were issued, and notification of my visit to each school made, from fourteen days to four months in advance; that the hour named in my circular for beginning the examination was in every case punctually kept; that all inordinate haste was avoided in conducting the examinations; that the unoccupied classes were dismissed—weather permitting—to the playground, so as to give every advantage to those under examination; that in the great majority of cases the usual midday recess was allowed; that, except under very peculiar circumstances, the children were not detained till a late hour in the afternoon; that considerateness and fairness were shown to all parties; that the teachers read out the whole of the dictation; and that friction throughout the examination was only once experienced. (5.) That the irregularity of attendance during the year has been fatal to high results. In consequence, neither the number nor the