

petence of the few of our teachers to whom either of those epithets still applies, is what might be expected. But there are too many zealous and competent men and women now seeking employment to leave any room for drones. My only regret is that it is not in my power so far to intensify the expression of my disapproval, in certain cases, as to overcome that dread of the hard work almost inevitable in every other occupation, which seems too strong even for the disgust occasioned by my outspoken criticism. In making his report two courses only seem open to an Inspector—either to place a confidential account of the state of each school in the hands of the School Committee or the Board, leaving a copy with the head-teacher, or to publish a plain statement as to the present condition of each school—a statement carrying with it such guarantees for its accuracy and fairness as the “fierce light” of publicity gives. A man who knows that his every word is liable to be called in question will be tolerably cautious as to what he prints. In the one case, the exact state of every public school is made known to every member of the public: in the other, this knowledge may be, and usually is, confined to a dozen people. And I appeal to the experience of the past whether, in every case but one, even my severest strictures have not been fully indorsed by the School Committees and parents concerned. The solitary exception, moreover, tells in my favour. Having deliberately adopted, I shall firmly adhere to the open system of reporting, being convinced that the good teacher will largely gain by it, and that the bad one will get what he naturally shrinks from—his deserts.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board.

W. C. HODGSON, Inspector.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Christchurch, 31st March, 1883.

We have the honour to submit the following general report for the year ending the 31st December, 1882:—

Owing to several causes, the work of inspection was considerably interrupted during the past year, rendering it impossible to overtake the examination of all schools in the district by the end of December. The few schools omitted were, however, examined before the date of this report. At our first conference, in June, we decided to adopt a uniform standard and style of examination, and to draw up several sets of questions. Further, we agreed to jointly examine the large town and borough schools—viz., Normal, Gloucester Street, West Christchurch, Sydenham, Lyttelton, Ashburton, St. Albans, Kaiapoi, Rangiora, Lower Heathcote, and Richmond. Not only did we examine the above together, but we also examined two of the smaller country schools, and we have thus every confidence in stating that all examinations last year were, as far as possible, conducted on exactly similar lines.

The number of schools in operation during the whole or part of the year was 132. Of these all were examined in standards except five. The five schools not so examined were Newland, Port Levy, Kowai Bush, Waiau, Waikari; and in each case there were valid reasons for the omission. In addition to the schools examined, ninety-three received at least one visit of inspection.

The total number of scholars on the registers at the dates of our examinations was 16,781, an increase of over seven hundred upon the previous year. There were present at examination 13,848; and here also there is a considerable increase, last year's number being 12,663. Table No. 1 shows the enrolments and attendances for the years 1880, 1881, and 1882.

TABLE NO. I.

	Enrolment.		Present at Examination.		Percentage.
1880	15,849	...	13,043	...	82
1881	16,076	...	12,663	...	79
1882	16,781	...	13,848	...	82

From the above table it will be seen that the percentage of those present at the examinations is somewhat in excess of the previous year, and just the same as that for 1880. We have taken some trouble to find out the cause of so many children being absent on examination-days, and fear that it is attributable to the fact that in these schools the backward children are not only not encouraged, but, in some cases, actually forbidden to be present. In a few instances the attendance was lowered by the state of the weather.

New schools were opened during the year at Methven, Lismore, Pendarves, Kirwee; and side schools at Malvern, Wakanui, and Oxford West. In the case of Lismore and Pendarves the buildings are altogether out of proportion to the number of children at present attending, or ever likely to attend. In the matter of furniture the schools in this district are generally well supplied, and nearly all are in possession of sufficient teaching appliances. Greater care is bestowed on the keeping of the school property than was formerly the case. There are still, however, some schools where we have noticed the desks unnecessarily inked, scratched, and otherwise damaged. As was pointed out in a previous report, the teachers are not in all cases to blame for this, as Committees are in the habit of fetting the rooms for dances, entertainments, &c., the furniture on such occasions being bundled anywhere out of the way. It would be well if some simple contrivance were devised for hanging maps on when in use before a class. At present it is not uncommon to see the maps thrown over the tops of easels or blackboards, and this practice soon destroys them. A map-rack to place the maps on when not in use is also required in the majority of our country schools.

The attendance at several of the town schools is fairly satisfactory, but there is yet much room left for improvement. The number of children to be seen playing about the streets during school hours is an undoubted indication that many parents do not appreciate the advantages of a free education. It is a matter of regret that the attendance at the great majority of the country schools is still very irregular and inconstant. Teachers complain—and very often justly so—that they find it impossible to efficiently prepare their pupils in the essential subjects of the syllabus, not to mention the optional. We feel bound, however, to state that, where the teaching is earnest and efficient, there the