

From Table I. it will be seen that in Standards I. and V. the average age is the same as it was last year, while in all the other standards it is somewhat lower. Seventy-three per cent. of the 10,274 pupils examined passed in the standard for which they were presented. The number is somewhat below that for last year, but, considering the change in the method of recording the results already explained, the result is by no means unsatisfactory. In comparing it with the corresponding result in other parts of New Zealand, it should be borne in mind that in Otago it is not a select number of pupils who have attended school regularly that is examined, but every child not an infant that has been more than six weeks in attendance. Were those only examined who had made 260 attendances (as in some other parts of the colony) the percentage of passes would be very much higher. While there has been a decline in the number of passes in Standards II., III., IV., and V., there has been a considerable increase in Standards I. and VI.

Table II. contains a very instructive statement of the percentage of passes in the seven subjects in which the individual examination is held. The results it records are on the whole of a very satisfactory character. In reading, spelling, writing, geography, and history 80 or more passed out of every 100 examined. In arithmetic and grammar the results, though lower, are such as the schools and their teachers need not be ashamed of. This table shows the actual state of instruction in the schools of this district with much greater accuracy than any statement of passes in standards could possibly do.

Table III. shows the percentage of passes in each subject for each standard separately. To those who are acquainted with the working of the programme of instruction the variations in the numbers in the different columns will not be unexpected. In general, where there is a low percentage there is a wide interval between that standard and the one next below it in the particular subject considered. The difference in the numbers in the different columns is further fairly proportioned to the difficulty and abstruseness of the subjects, grammar and arithmetic fitly showing the lowest percentages. It may be worth while to add some further observations on this table. In Standard I. the results in reading, spelling, and writing are excellent; and in arithmetic they are very good. The children presented in Standard I. are, of course, the youngest that are examined. The work is done by the classes standing in front of the Inspector, the questions being given out orally. The very high percentage of passes shows very clearly that the classes at this stage have been well taught, and that the examination is conducted in a kindly way. Were there any general feeling of timidity or nervousness caused by the Inspector's manner of dealing with or speaking to the children, the results would show more decided traces of its effects.

The results in Standard II. are on the whole very good. Spelling, which is dictated *viva voce* by the Inspector, is the best subject, again showing that direct intercourse with the Inspector does not prevent the scholars from answering well. The passes in reading have been reduced by failures in the explanation of words; but they are still high. In arithmetic and geography, where the results are lowest, the questions are written on the blackboard, and the answers worked out by the pupils at their leisure on slates at the desks. The failures in arithmetic are mainly due, I think, to want of care and attention rather than to ignorance; but in geography, where the work is definite and the questions proposed plain, they are probably due to faults of teaching.

In Standard III. good work has been done in nearly all the subjects. In reading and spelling, the only subjects in which the Inspector has direct oral communication with the scholars, the results are good, and the same is true of writing, geography, and history; but in the last-mentioned subject passes are in this standard allowed for very little. In arithmetic and grammar, which are always answered at the desks from printed questions, the results are much lower. In arithmetic, indeed, they show decidedly inferior teaching, for the questions set are perfectly plain and straightforward, while there is nothing to prevent the pupils, seated as they are at their desks, from doing their best. In most cases the time allowed is sufficient for working the questions more than once. In grammar I think the results very fair, for the subject is rather abstruse, and, besides, a certain facility in framing simple sentences is required, to secure which no small skill on the part of the teacher is needed.

In Standard IV. the results in spelling, writing, and history are good; in reading, grammar, and geography they are fair; and in arithmetic bad. The failures in reading have been mainly caused by inability to explain the language of the lessons. The books usually read by this class are of a difficult character, and much attention to the meaning of words and phrases is necessary to make sure that the scholars fully understand what they read. I hope that the attempt to test the comprehension of the language of the lessons, which has been made this year for the first time and will be continued in years to come, will stimulate attention to this important matter, which has always been a weak point in the work of the Otago schools. To this day not a few schools are to be found where the pupils cannot explain the meaning of the poetry they have committed to memory. The very poor results in arithmetic are partly due to the great interval between this standard and the one next below it; but this consideration will account only in part for the numerous failures: the examinations in the subject are intentionally kept up to a fairly high level, but even at that they are not difficult. A lately appointed Inspector of Schools in another district of New Zealand, who has had recent and extensive experience in teaching under the departmental programme of instruction, informs me that he considers the arithmetic papers set in this district rather easy. If this is so, it seems a fair conclusion that the teaching of arithmetic at this stage is on the average at fault.

In Standard V. the results are very good in all the subjects except arithmetic and grammar. No doubt a good deal of back work has to be made up in arithmetic at this stage, which will largely account for the low average of proficiency. For the low figures in the grammar column the character of the teaching is, I think, responsible.

The results in Standard VI. are excellent in most of the subjects, and satisfactory in all. No fewer than 414 were examined at seventy-five different schools. The appearance made by these pupils is most gratifying, and shows that a large proportion of the schools are capable of doing the most advanced work much better than one would expect from their performance in the intermediate standards.

Of the many causes that lead to failures the most usual are irregular attendance and unskilful