

ing: the ages of the scholars, the regularity or irregularity of their attendance, the strength of the staff with relation to the number of scholars and the length of time that children have spent in the same class.

7. The last-named is perhaps the most important of all, and is rendered doubly so this year on account of the large number of children who failed last year. Now a very considerable portion of these were probably retained in the same classes, and consequently have had two years to accomplish the same work which others had to do in one. All the schools, therefore, which showed many failures last year, supposing them to have retained the "plucked" ones in the same classes (which as a rule is the case), will evidently have a great advantage over those whose scholars passed into a higher standard after last examination. For instance, at one school, out of twenty-three examined last year, only one passed. The twenty-two children who failed were retained in the same classes, and, as a consequence, this year the school appears with a general percentage of 97, whilst the percentages of marks in the several standards are amongst the highest in the district. At another small school, showing a general percentage of 90, every child who passed had been two years in the same class. It behoves Committees, therefore, before congratulating teachers upon the positions occupied by their schools on the table of results, to ascertain for themselves how far this apparent superiority is due to the above cause, and, to enable them to do so more effectually, I intend, if possible, shortly to furnish them with a statement of the number of children so retained in their respective schools. Next year I hope to make arrangements for having the marks of the unpromoted children recorded separately.

8. In the last annual report of the Minister of Education there is a table (N, page xiii.) showing the numbers and proportions of passes in standards in the different education districts. This would be a most valuable and suggestive return if the inspection of schools were, as it ought to be, under the control of the department, and conducted upon something approaching to a uniform method. Being, however, the result of (possibly) twelve different interpretations of the standard requirements, but little value can be placed upon any inference drawn from a comparison of the figures it contains. Taken for what they may be worth, the following facts appear with respect to this district. The percentages of passes in the First, Second, and Third Standards were 6, 10, and 16 per cent. respectively *below* the average of the twelve districts; and there were nine, ten, and seven districts, respectively, showing a higher percentage of passes than Westland. In the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Standards the percentages of passes were 6, 15, and 22 per cent. respectively *above* the average of the twelve districts. In the Fourth only two districts showed a higher percentage of passes, and none in the Fifth and Sixth. The complaint, still occasionally whispered, as it were, in this district, concerning the difficulty of the papers set at the standard examinations, cannot have any substantial foundation, if we may judge from the comparison just instituted, nor do I think it would be to the interest of education to relax any further the stringency of the examinations. I should much prefer a smaller percentage of passes, obtained from a fairly strict examination, to a far higher percentage under easier conditions. When we consider how widely children differ with regard to intellectual capacity, the fact of any standard showing few or no failures is not necessarily a subject for congratulation. It may indicate that the questions set have been suited to the lowest, and not to the average, capacity of the examinees. Much has been said from time to time about the tendency of a severe examination to induce to "cram" instead of intelligent instruction and education, but it is questionable whether the wide range of the syllabus is not quite as responsible for this (if, indeed, it exists to any serious extent) as a strict interpretation of its requirements, and, moreover, we should remember that, although "cram" is a bad schoolmaster, he is at least better than "sham."

9. I had occasion to remark, in my last report, that nine out of the seventeen principal schools in the district had passed less than 70 per cent. of the number examined. This year only one of these falls below 70 per cent., and, assuming that anything less than 70 per cent. indicates an unsatisfactory school, there are in the whole district only four which would come under this description, having passed 57, 38, 33, and 50 per cent. respectively of the number examined. Our satisfaction with this improvement must, however, be tempered by the considerations referred to in the seventh paragraph.

10. ELEMENTARY SCIENCE.—The annexed table gives the results of the examination in elementary science. The text-book prescribed for the year was Foster's Physiology. The fifth and sixth classes only were examined. The subject was undertaken at six schools, as against nine last year. It is much to be regretted that so important a school as Greymouth should have disappeared from this list. I recommend that Huxley's Introductory Primer be adopted as the science text-book for the coming year.

SCHOOLS.	STANDARD V.		STANDARD VI.	
	Number examined.	Average Percentage of Marks.	Number examined.	Average Percentage of Marks.
Kumara	15	67	12	82
Hokitika ..	35	52	20	80
Kanieri	3	35	4	52
Cobden	6	37	3	49
Brunnerton	2	29	2	38
Goldsborough			1	6