

The teachers at the Saturday classes have shown a large amount of interest in drill during the past year, and have evinced a great desire to become efficient. During the year I have attended thirty schools, fifteen of the same every week, and exercising thereat about five thousand pupils. The remaining fifteen, being country schools, have been visited once every five weeks, and at these I have exercised about fifteen hundred pupils, the exercises taught by me on my visits being carried out during the intervals by the teachers. Owing to the regular attendance of teachers at the Saturday classes, and the knowledge they have acquired during the year I am now able to get through more work during my visits to the schools than previously, as the teachers render me all the assistance in their power. The Saturday classes for teachers included forty males, sixty-seven lady teachers, and ninety-nine pupil-teachers, in addition to thirty students belonging to the Training College, making in all a total of 236 receiving instruction in drill and calisthenics every Saturday morning.

Before concluding my report, I desire to bring under your notice the following three matters:— (1.) A great inconvenience arises from the want of a uniform system of desk drill throughout the schools. In reference to this, I am prepared to give instruction in such a system, and have already done so in several schools during the past year. I am also willing to compile a manual on the subject, if instructed by the Board to do so. (2.) Some teachers allow the children to stand up or sit down in a careless and slovenly manner, thus causing a noise in slamming back their seats. They also allow the scholars to make a noise in removing and replacing their slates. (3.) Many teachers do not pay sufficient attention to the manner in which the pupils hold their heads while writing. I have observed the writing position of some of the pupils in many of the schools I visit, and have found it simply execrable. There is little use in giving instruction in drill and calisthenics if scholars are allowed during the writing lesson to almost rest the left cheek on the left forearm, to bury the chin in the chest, to raise the right shoulder, and to lower the left. Such a position occupied at every writing lesson during the week seriously affects the health and the appearance of the pupils.

I trust you will not consider I have exceeded my duty in mentioning these matters, but as I know the Board takes a great interest in the physical development of the children attending the public schools, and as I am responsible for the carriage and appearance of the scholars, I feel it simply my duty to bring before your notice any practices which have an injurious effect on the health of the pupils.

I have, &c.,

OWEN MAHON,

Instructor of Drill and Gymnastics, Auckland.

HAWKE'S BAY

SIR,—

Napier, 31st January 1884.

When, little more than five years ago, I had the honour of submitting to you my first annual report upon the condition of education in Hawke's Bay I had occasion to point out the many educational wants of the district, and how necessary it was that something should be done without delay to remedy those defects in the system which were acting as hindrances to the progress and efficiency of the Board schools. At that time, the accommodation provided in the schools then in operation, both good and bad, was only sufficient for an attendance of a few hundred children, and the school appliances and apparatus were meagre and mostly unsuitable. Napier the principal town, had no school building, the teaching being carried on in three hired rooms, viz. a public hall, a church, and a building used as a Sunday-school and throughout the district the teachers, with two or three exceptions, were untrained and uncertificated for the work in which they were engaged. During the time which has since intervened twenty-nine school-houses, nine class-rooms, and eighteen teachers' residences have been erected in the district, suitable school sites have been either purchased or otherwise obtained for most of the schools and, with few exceptions, good and substantial apparatus has been provided for the use of teachers and pupils. Napier has now three large and commodious school-houses, capable of holding nearly 800 pupils, and many of the teachers holding appointments under the Board have obtained certificates of competency from the Education Department, whilst not a few of them have been specially trained for their profession as teachers.

SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION.—At the close of the school year ended the 31st December thirty-six schools, containing thirty-nine departments, were in active operation. These were staffed by ninety-six teachers, of whom thirty-nine hold either licenses to teach or certificates of competency from the Government. The accommodation provided in the thirty-nine departments, for the 5,000 children who ought to be attending school, is sufficient for an attendance of 3,461 children, whilst at the close of the year the attendance was 3,726, or an excess of attendance over accommodation of 265, and an excess of children in the district over accommodation of 1,274. In six of the districts—viz., Patutahi, Waerenga-a-hika, Mohaka, Ongaonga, Takapau, and Tarawera—school work is carried on in buildings which do not belong to the Board, and there are still twelve districts in each of which a teacher's residence is badly required. At Matawhero, near Gisborne, the building which was erected in 1879-80 is so overcrowded as to cause serious sickness among the pupils, and at Woodville, Hastings, and Clive the schools are too small for present needs. As will be seen in Table I. appended to the Board's report, showing the accommodation and attendance returns for each school, the majority of the schools where the attendance exceeds seventy-five are full, and at Mangatua, near Woodville, and Te Arai, in the Poverty Bay district, there are many children for whom accommodation ought to be provided. I regret to say that the want of needful school supply and the absence of teachers' residences have acted in the past, and still act, as great hindrances to the progress and growth of true educational efficiency in the district. It is true that the majority of the school districts are now fairly well provided for, but many of them have long been labouring under conditions which make success in school work next to impossible. It has been too long and