

The tone, discipline, and general management of nearly all the district town schools are very satisfactory. Most of those in the Wairarapa present a favourable contrast to several of the city schools in the neatness and appointments of the class-room. In the larger of those schools also, as well as in one or two city schools, well-drilled rifle corps are maintained.

COUNTRY SCHOOLS.—Except at Petone, the results in the country schools are not strong this year. At Petone not only was the percentage of results high, but the work throughout showed much accurate and careful work. At Pahautanui and Porirua the classes were fairly satisfactory, and, in most subjects, improved. For years past good work has been done at Tawa, Judgeford, and Wadestown, but there was a considerable falling-off this year in the numbers passing standards. The Maungaroa School was rather weak last year, and is not much stronger this. Spelling and reading are far from strong, and arithmetic is weak in upper-standard work. The Makara School is improving, being better appointed, and the master working with more system after his residence in the normal school. Johnsonville School was in a depressed condition at the time of my visit, made when the present master had just taken charge but, under the new management, there is every hope of a better future for the school.

RURAL SCHOOLS.—At the Horokiwi Valley School the teacher had not been long in charge, but the writing was already improved. The small school at Wallace is fairly satisfactory. Wainuiomata School suffers from irregular attendance, and is characterized by good reading and poor arithmetic. Vogeltown is quite a new school, on the outskirts of Wellington, only lately opened at the time of my visit. The Korokoro School was closed for three months of the year. In the two latter schools no passes were looked for, and, under such circumstances, a full percentage must result. Their working condition, however, was quite satisfactory. It is pleasing to notice the work done in a new district like Whiteman's Valley. Two years ago there was no school, and many children had grown up, in a bush district, without any education whatever. There are now seventeen of the twenty-one children who read and write, and generally do the work of their standards well, and who come most regularly to school along wretched roads.

CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF THE WORK.—After again looking through my notes made on the day of examination, and the papers of the pupils, I find there are many matters, touching the character and quality of the work, to which attention should be directed. In standard passes there is a wide difference in value between the pass in which the pupil does fair work in all subjects and good work in some, and the bare pass in which there is absolute failure in one subject—possibly an important one such as grammar or arithmetic—and moderate work in others. So, also, two schools may obtain the same percentage of passes, and the work of one be much inferior in many respects, to that of the other. I may say generally that in reading, writing, spelling, geography, and composition the minimum requirements of the standards are fairly reached and that the class-work of the schools in these subjects is satisfactory, although still capable of improvement and that good work is done, in some schools, by really good class-teachers, in all standards, and more especially in the Sixth Standard work of the larger schools. But, although the minimum of the work in many subjects is met, there is still great deficiency in some schools in the quality of the work, and in the treatment of subjects developing thought and intelligence.

Most children in our largest schools read fluently and correctly but they are not often well able to explain the difficulties of the narrative. The handwriting is generally legible and neat, but there is apparently no aim on the part of some teachers to produce accuracy of form and similarity of style. The writing is varied in character in the same class, and appears to have been picked up rather than learned. And yet I could point to large classes skilfully taught, in which every scholar more or less faithfully imitated the model in both form and style.

In grammar and arithmetic more remains to be done. Composition is improved, but the knowledge of words and of the use of words is very limited. Also I frequently find that children, who can write a passably fair composition exercise when on their guard, break down entirely in any other written work, so much so that in answering other questions they will begin answers without the use of capital letters, and disregard every rule which has guided them in their composition. The grammar exercises should be more varied, as it is quite common for children who have been working in a certain groove, to altogether miss the purport of a question. These candidates, when asked to give the meaning of words, or to make sentences containing them, parse the words given. Others, from want of practice in dealing with questions, from thoughtlessness, or want of training in habits of preciseness and correctness, copy down wrong for right, or do the whole of a question when only part is asked for. Others, again, who must have been very badly taught, use capital letters and the apostrophe on every possible occasion, even for verbs. I am sorry to find in several schools that, while the subject-matter of the letter required in Standard IV is often well done, the form of the letter is not insisted on. Of Standard VI. pupils I think something more might be expected in the comprehension of narrative. For instance, few candidates could give any intelligent meaning to the sentence "An astrologer's old quill to a sheepskin gave the story." The teaching of arithmetic is defective in many classes of our schools. The processes are often fairly mastered, but the explanation given on the black-board is not full and explicit enough, and, as a rule, sufficient problems are not given. Also some teachers do not take the trouble to dictate sums, or write them in words, instead of setting figures on the black-board nor do they give sufficient variety of the same work to meet an examination well. The side work of the upper-standard papers shows how much room there is for improvement in method and arrangement of work. I am sorry to find that in Standard IV it is getting more common for pupils to neglect the form or construction of the bill required to be made out. In future this should be insisted on.

In the past year I have examined history and geography orally, partly because it is desirable that part of the examination should be oral, and partly for special reasons. Many more questions can be asked, and the examiner comes in contact with the ready intelligence of the class, and he can form, in connection with the written work, a truer idea of the value of the teaching. Also the