

The discipline adopted is generally mild and judicious. In only two instances during the year did we hear of undue severity on the part of the teachers. There is still, we regret to say, in some schools, a great want of self-reliance. Owing to the absence of a firm and uniform system of government, the children appear to be unable to fix their attention on the work required of them. It would save a great deal of trouble and confusion on the days of examination if teachers arranged their pupils in the same order as their names appear on the schedules.

There has been, in some quarters, a considerable outcry regarding home-lessons. We cannot see how school work can be carried on, in accordance with the present regulations, without home tasks. We quite recognize the evil of teachers giving too much work to be done at home. We have frequently seen exercise-books, where it was evident that the amount of writing required was far too great. It is here that the evil lies. Home-lessons—*i.e.*, the preparation of grammar, geography, and history—must of necessity be prepared out of school hours, and it may occasionally be advisable, in order to keep up the back work, that questions should be set to be answered at home. In our opinion, home-lessons should not be longer than would occupy a child of average ability from an hour to an hour and a half.

The new regulations respecting the employment and instruction of pupil-teachers, which came into force at the beginning of the present year, are fairly acceptable to the majority of those teachers interested. The principal ground of complaint is that school management has been retained in the second and third years, but we are convinced that if this had not been done very little attention would have been paid, in some schools, to the instruction and training of the pupil-teachers in the practical work of teaching. We fear that in some schools the work required of pupil-teachers is too much for their strength, and we are convinced that before very long something will have to be done to limit the time given by them to actual teaching.

The usual schedules are attached.

The Chairman, Education Board.

We have, &c.,

W. L. EDGE, M.A.,
JAMES CUMMING, } Inspectors.

SOUTH CANTERBURY

SIR,—

Timaru, 8th January, 1884.

I have the honour to present my report on the condition of primary education in the South Canterbury District for the year ending 31st December, 1883.

At the close of the year there were forty-one schools under the control of the Board. Of these, thirty-nine were in operation, having 3,862 names on the rolls and 3,015 pupils in average attendance. Two schools, Opihi and Orari North, were temporarily closed. The Sutherlands School was opened at the end of the September quarter, too late for a standard examination this year. For want of time the Mount Gay School is not yet examined. The Seaview School was examined by Mr Hammond in July last. In the thirty-six schools whose examinations are included in this report, there were 3,772 pupils, with an average attendance of 2,940. Of these, 3,027 were present at the time of my examination: the absence of the 566 was accounted for chiefly through the prevalence of whooping-cough during the last four months. There were 2,041 pupils presented for the several standards, and 1,494 gained a higher classification, giving a percentage of passes for the whole district of 73·2, which is a slight decrease on that of last year. There are now 2,188 pupils classed in the standards, and 1,585 are unclassified, but, on the whole, these are doing good work in the infant classes. Forty-two per cent. of the pupils may appear a large proportion to be below the standards, but I think the teachers do well in withholding these children so long as they are below eight years of age. They will be better prepared for the regular standard work next year, and will be more likely to pass each succeeding standard year after year with ease and credit, through the greater development of intelligence acquired by the delay.

The following table shows the average ages of the candidates in each standard, the numbers presented and passed, and the percentages gained:—

—		Average Age.	Number presented.	Number passed.	Percentage gained.
		Yrs. mos.			
Standard VI.	..	13 0	84	68	80·9
Standard V		12 7	176	112	63·6
Standard IV		11 7	354	195	55
Standard III.		11 0	421	257	61
Standard II.		9 6	474	379	79·9
Standard I.		8 2	532	483	90·7
Whole district		10 3	2,041	1,494	73·19

The percentages gained by the scholars in Standards I., II., and VI. are very satisfactory, but there is great weakness in Standards III. and IV., and the effects of this have tended to bring down the results in Standard V. The requirements of these standards seem to have been held far too lightly by the teachers, although, perhaps, they are the most important in the syllabus. After passing Standard IV the law does not compel attendance at school, and a comparatively small number of our pupils remain to complete the prescribed course. It is, therefore, only reasonable to expect that the pupils passing this standard should be fairly educated. They should be able to read fluently, to write a fair hand, to make out in proper form and accurately an account or invoice, and to show that they are conversant with the rudiments of grammar and geography. The fact that