

I do not consider that there has been much improvement in the methods of teaching in many of the schools during the past year.

It has frequently been represented to me by School Committees and by teachers that they undergo great inconvenience and expense by the wretched state in which the dwellings attached to the school are often given up by outgoing teachers. I think it is absolutely necessary that some means should be taken to remedy this evil. I brought the matter under the notice of the Board some four years ago.

In singing, gymnastics, and drawing satisfactory progress has been made. Mr. Robinson, the drawing-master, seems to have got over the difficulty of teaching mechanical drawing as part of the school course, which has hitherto seemed almost insurmountable.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Education Board, Auckland.

R. J. O'SULLIVAN, Inspector.

2.—MR. GOODWIN'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Auckland, 12th March, 1886.

I have the honour to present a report of my work for the year 1885.

During the year I examined ninety-five schools in standards, and inspected five. In the earlier part of the year, until the end of April, I was engaged in the northern part of the district, in the winter I was in the Waikato and at the Thames, and the latter part of the year in and near Auckland, occupied with the examination of some of the town and suburban schools. I also examined the Hamilton and Cambridge District High Schools, and took part in the pupil-teachers' examination.

The number of children on the rolls of the schools examined by me was 9,019: of these, 2,987 were below Standard I., 1,070 were absent on day of examination, and 5,180 were actually examined; of these, 3,975, or a little more than 76 per cent., passed in their respective standards.

Of the schools that have come under my notice I may, I think, on the whole report favourably: I am of opinion that they are improving steadily year by year. In the northern portion of this district the schools are, with few exceptions, very small, and the salaries paid at present are not sufficient to tempt highly-qualified or experienced teachers to take charge of them. In some cases they are in the hands of persons who were appointed many years ago. Possessed of no experience to begin with, remote from intercourse with their better-qualified brethren, they had in the earlier days to work under considerable disadvantage. Some of these teachers have done really good work; others, without natural aptitude, with little knowledge and no industry, have, as they deserved, failed in the profession they ought never to have adopted, and their places are being filled as rapidly as circumstances will admit. In the southern portion of the district the schools are larger and more accessible, the salaries are higher, and in almost every case they are in the care of teachers of more or less experience, whose work would, I hope, compare favourably with that of teachers in any part of the colony.

I now proceed to remark upon the results of the instruction given in the several standard-subjects.

I cannot say that, as a rule, the art of reading is well taught. Although the words read are generally correctly pronounced, and the subject-matter of the lesson well known, there is little attempt at expression, and in the lower standards I have noticed a tendency to get the lesson by heart. In some of the country schools the children read in so low a tone as to be almost inaudible. When this occurs I expect failures, and I am seldom mistaken: most children are eager to display what they can do well; and a low tone in reading or answering is to me indicative of want of knowledge—they do not read loudly because they cannot read properly, and perhaps dread reproof. There are, of course, cases where the child is really nervous or timid; but these, I feel sure, are rare exceptions. I should recommend teachers to give more attention to "pattern reading." In Standards V. and VI., where more difficult words are introduced, very few seem able to clearly grasp their meaning. I find the results in spelling, as tested by dictation, very satisfactory; as shown in composition, where the pupils are at liberty to choose their own words, it is anything but creditable. I attribute this to neglect in correcting transcription exercises, and to the fact that very few of the children attending our schools read anything except their lesson-books. Spelling is learnt more by the eye than the ear, and those pupils who are fond of reading at home generally spell correctly.

Writing in this district is not, in my opinion, so good as it was. Good penmanship is the result of constant practice, care, and obedience to instructions. I am afraid that some teachers are relaxing their vigilance in this direction. It is, however, only fair to state that, out of the many thousands of papers I have from time to time had to correct, I have rarely, even in Standard III., found the writing illegible.

The mechanical operations in arithmetic, involving little thought, are generally well done, though not always with that perfect accuracy which, to my mind, is so important a feature in the more elementary portions of this subject. I always give at least one problem in every standard above the first; but the results hitherto have not been very satisfactory. Most of our teachers are now adopting the later and more scientific method of instruction in arithmetic—more appeals are made to the reason and less to the memory than formerly. I should be glad to see a better knowledge of decimal fractions in the Sixth Standard. Mental arithmetic has not received the attention it deserves: it would be well if all fresh rules were introduced to the pupils at first mentally—I mean in the form of questions requiring few figures, and of not greater complexity than can be easily retained in the memory.

I cannot speak very highly of grammar work. The parts of speech and inflexions in Standards III. and IV. are usually well known; but it is in the parsing of Standards V. and VI. that faulty