

to alter or improve with a surer touch on the sequence of their work. The attendance and admission registers were examined. They were generally well and accurately kept, with their entries posted to date of visit; still, in several instances a little more care in their preservation is not too much to expect. Circulars and regulations, issued by the office from time to time, should always be kept in some convenient cover or exhibited on the walls for handy reference.

At the close of December, 1884, the attendance was 2,113. This year the increase is decidedly better, being 148, or ninety-five more than that of last year. This places the attendance at 2,261 for the December quarter. The scheduled number, 2,226, is slightly under this, owing to the examinations covering more than the last quarter of the year. Of this number, 1,381 were presented in standards, 808 were presented in preparatory classes, and thirty-seven were re-examined in standards already passed. As the Board allowed me to exempt from each school's percentage of passes those failing whose attendance was under 60 per cent. of the number of times the school was opened, the presentations in standards were slightly increased by teachers allowing scholars whose over-classification was reported last year to attempt the next higher standard. Such action reduced the number for re-examination, which I expected would have been much greater, as 162 were marked as unsatisfactory by failing to make pass-marks when re-examined last year. Although the number examined is slightly increased—from 1,725 to 1,852—the attendance at examination is still, as formerly, at 83 per cent. on the scheduled number. With fine weather prevailing, and the absence of any epidemic, there has been no reasonable excuse to prevent a better attendance on the examination day. Probably many parents are indifferent about their children passing the standard examinations.

The question of irregular attendance, the burden of every teacher's complaint, is becoming of serious moment to the Board. Its efforts to meet the growing wants of the district by erecting new buildings, as well as maintaining and repairing existing ones, are being crippled by the loss to its revenue caused by the irregularity. During the present year nearly £2,600, a sum sufficient to have undertaken most of the pressing claims, has been lost. Until improvement takes place in the daily attendance, neither efficiency in instruction nor a satisfactory condition of your school-buildings can fairly be looked for. The fact that the working average is 3 per cent. less than last year clearly shows that many parents are unconcerned about their responsibilities, despite the inclination of the Board to grant privileges that are denied in other portions of the colony. Much explanation of the fitful attendance is attainable from a perusal of the quarterly returns of children in irregular attendance, furnished by teachers during the past nine months. Perhaps a few of the remarks given as reasons for non-attendance will best exemplify and convince that a large share of this wrong can fairly be set down to the apathy and unconcern of parents. Here are a few about boys and girls from thirteen to fifteen years of age: "Passed Standard I.;" "Passed no standard.;" "Said to have passed Standard I.;" "Comes for a change.;" "Has not passed Standard I.;" Some of the commoner excuses are: "Required at home.;" "Keeps cows out of neighbour's garden.;" "Assists parents." A few of quite a different class are: "Education neglected.;" "Indifference on the part of parents.;" "Come when they like.;" "Should be at school.;" "Neglected.;" "Running wild." I fear those of the latter class are likely to bring about the expenditure of a still greater capitation than that allowed to Education Boards. With the new clauses in our amended Education Act, such a state of things should not now be tolerated. The Board's solicitor is the proper person to stamp out such reasons as the last given for non-attendance. From conversations with Chairmen and members of several School Committees I know there is a willingness and a desire to aid in this direction if some person is empowered to take the needful steps. At Huirangi, Lepperton, Midhirst, Omata, Tikorangi, Wortley Road, Waipuku, Koru, and Waitara, the irregularity prevails, indeed, to such extent at several of the schools named that a monetary loss has taken place through the capitation falling short of the ordinary working expenses. This should not be the case, as the list includes a number of our best country schools, where considerable sums of money have been expended during the past two years in erecting new buildings and enlarging others. Before leaving this subject I mention the fact that only seven first-class and thirty-three second-class certificates of attendance were required for issue throughout the whole district. This will make known the wide extent to which the evil prevails.

The passes in standards are 819, as against 472, or an excess over last year of 347. The best returns are certainly those of the Sixth and First Standards: in the first, due undoubtedly to the experience of the teachers in schools where presentations were made, and in the latter to the better acquaintance generally with the work of that standard. The Third and Fourth are fairly creditable, but the results are disappointing in the Second, and indifferent to bad in the Fifth. At Rahotu and the Inglewood Girls' School all presented passed with credit. Very good work was done at the Central, Fitzroy, Lower Mangorei, Oakura, and Waitara East Schools, while at thirteen others the passes ranged from 12 to 50 per cent. on the number presented.

Numerically the best evidence of the year's teaching is shown by the percentage of marks, which is 62.2 on 1,213 examined. Last year this was 55.9 on 884. The improvement is unquestionably due to the better methods adopted by teachers, along with a closer adherence to standard lines, than had been formerly followed. The percentage is not by any means yet what it should be, although there are good grounds for hope that it will, however, rise in schools, where the results were lowered by many failures in special subjects, as better work in these was evident, when compared with that of my former examinations. Altogether, when the past is reviewed and the many difficulties considered under which all have had to labour, the outcome of the year's teaching must be considered fairly satisfactory.

The examination questions, regarding which no complaint was made to me, were favourably received, and somewhat similar in character to last year's ones. The few changes, however, were evidently new to the teaching at several schools, where probably the opinion existed that the same routine of last examination would be followed.