

subjects which are now required to be taught to children between one standard examination and another, without finding imperfections somewhere. But already other and more practical class-subjects are pressing into notice, and, for my part, I can see no way how they can be taught, except by an interchange with some of the present standard subjects, or by the establishment of evening advanced and technical classes. Certainly, if the instruction which is now given in the schools is to be of permanent value to the children, and to the social and industrial needs of the country, either evening classes, as suggested here, must soon form a part of a general school system, or a new standard syllabus will be needed, in which technical and literary standard examinations will follow one another in alternate years. How the evening classes, if established, could be maintained without any increase in the capitation grant, I have already pointed out in a report presented by me a year ago.

School Committees.—In concluding this report, I think it due to the large majority of the School Committees to say that they are doing a good work in their respective districts. My reports do not always give them satisfaction, for they dislike to present bad reports to the householders at the annual meetings, and I notice that some of them are inclined to think harshly of the Inspector on this account, until a little experience shows them the effect of plain speaking upon the well-being of a school. But, with all their faults—and they are not a few—the School Committees deserve credit for the good they have done and are still doing, and I am quite sure that without their help the school organization of this district would have been far less efficient than it now is.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Board of Education, Napier.

H. HILL, Inspector.

MARLBOROUGH.

SIR,—

Picton, 18th March, 1886.

I have the honour to submit to you my annual report on the public schools of this district for the year 1885.

I have examined twenty-five schools, with a total attendance of 1,347 scholars on examination-day. The number of scholars on the roll of these schools—1,535—exceeds by only five that for last year, the absentees from examination being, however, fewer by forty-four. On the whole, the results of this year's examination compare very favourably with those obtained the previous year, the percentage of passes—92—being exceptionally high. A considerable increase has also taken place in the number of children presented for standard work. A summary, giving my opinion as to the way in which each subject is usually taught in the schools in this district, may be of service. The reading of the older scholars is relatively much better than that of the juniors. The common fault is bawling. Teachers seem to forget that if the voice is strained all modulation is lost, and that distinctness can be attained without any approach to loudness. The reading of the scholars presented for the First Standard still falls far short of what it ought to be, especially in several of the larger schools, as will be pointed out in the detailed notice of each school. The spelling, as a rule, is much better than the reading. The handwriting of the scholars, though somewhat better than it was several years ago, still leaves much to be desired, both methods of teaching and results being defective. Where sufficient pains are taken to teach this art, as at Renwick or Havelock Suburban, the writing is uniformly good throughout the school; but such work is still quite exceptional. Even in so apparently simple a particular as the proper position of the writer—a matter of detail that I have repeatedly pointed out on my visits of inspection—I can detect little, if any, improvement. I begin, indeed, almost to despair of ever seeing a school in which every pupil, during a writing-lesson, sits upright, with shoulders squared, hands in the proper position, and feet firmly planted on the floor. The bulk of our scholars still sprawl and loll in every conceivable posture but the right one, with feet crossed, or doubled up underneath, and with face almost touching the copy-book. The most effectual way of bringing about a reform in this respect would seem to be the refusing of a pass in writing to every scholar who does not sit properly on examination day when writing. Arithmetic is thoroughly well taught in the majority of our schools, the latest and best methods of teaching being followed, as a rule. So much prominence has, indeed, been given to this subject during the last two or three years that time is hardly left for other equally important matters, such as reading. I therefore purpose making the arithmetic papers somewhat easier—which the new regulations enable me to do—so that more attention may be paid to such subjects as at present get less than their share of time. Geography, including map-drawing from memory, is very successfully taught, oral teaching having to a great extent superseded the text-book. In history too much reliance is still placed on book-work, and the answers obtained from the scholars are much less satisfactory than those usually given in geography. Formal grammar gets as much attention as it is entitled to, letter-writing on familiar subjects now forming a regular part of the school course. Although the handwriting of these letters falls short of what I expect, their neatness and orderly arrangement are generally creditable. Needlework, so far as I am able to judge, is not neglected in any school where a mistress or assistant mistress is employed; but I regret that a practice which was at one time not uncommon has now fallen altogether into disuse. Formerly, a committee of ladies undertook to examine and report on the needlework in several of our schools. The praise or censure of experts had a value that cannot be claimed for the opinion of one whose knowledge of the mysteries of back-stitch and cutting out is necessarily of the most rudimentary kind. It is not, I think, too much to ask that in all our larger schools, at least, a good custom should be revived. The time and pains required are not a serious matter, and could hardly be better bestowed.

Having satisfied myself last year that there were some matters of detail affecting injuriously the Marlborough schools, and which might easily be altered for the better, I endeavoured to point out, not only what was amiss, but also wherein lay the way of cure. I made certain suggestions as to uniformity of school hours, as to a better and cheaper way of supplying the scholars with books