

beneficial to the children in many ways; and I trust that teachers will take a hearty interest in the matter. I regret to notice that maps and other appliances supplied by the Board are badly cared for in a good many schools, especially where changes of teachers have been frequent. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to sheet home a charge of neglect to individuals. It is anything but a sign of good discipline in the service that matters of this kind have to be commented on so frequently.

I have, &c.,

The Secretary, Education Board, Otago.

D. PETRIE, M.A., Inspector.

2.—MR. TAYLOR'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Education Office, Dunedin, 16th March, 1886.

I have the honour to submit my report for the year 1885.

During the year I made fifty-two visits of inspection, and examined seventy-seven schools—nine with Mr. Petrie, twenty-six with Mr. Goyen, and forty-two without assistance. Some considerable time was also occupied with the examination of scholarship and pupil-teacher papers, compiling annual report tables, and with other office work.

Of the fifty-two schools inspected by me, 56 per cent. may be set down as good, 28 per cent. as fair, and 16 per cent. as inferior. This record compares very favourably with the corresponding one of last year, in which 20 per cent. of the schools inspected by me were stated to be in an inefficient condition. With one or two exceptions the third group is composed of some of the smallest schools in the district, which are not likely to show much improvement, as they do not hold out sufficient inducement for teachers of any ability to remain in them. In sparsely populated districts small schools may be a necessity, but every precaution should be taken against their needless multiplication. Parents often thoughtlessly agitate for a small school at their own doors, to save their children a little physical discomfort, without considering that their mental culture will be in a great measure sacrificed by so doing, for the plain reason that such schools will never command the services of teachers of real merit. Such agitation will, of course, continue until districts are obliged to contribute largely and directly towards the maintenance of their own schools.

The gross percentages in standards and in subjects are the same as last year. In the several subjects of examination there has been a satisfactory advance, except in writing and arithmetic, where there has been a decline—very trifling in the former, but considerable in the latter. The results gained by Standard II. compare unfavourably with those of last year, while those of Standard IV. present a marked improvement. The former has fallen behind in spelling and arithmetic, while Standard IV. has pulled up in reading, and especially in arithmetic and grammar. It is very gratifying, for two reasons, to find Standard IV., which used to be considered the most backward of all, and caused greater disappointment to both teachers and examiners than any other, this year taking such a forward position. It is the standard referred to in section 90 of the Education Act, which assumes that a child is not even fairly educated until he has passed it. Its improved position also goes to show that the teaching here has become less mechanical and more intelligent, especially in reading, arithmetic, and grammar, subjects which afford so much scope for mental training. It is not easy to give a reason for the falling-off in spelling of Standard II., for this subject usually receives excellent attention, and good methods are generally employed in teaching it. Besides, in the case of Standard II., the examination in spelling is confined to words of two syllables, taken from the reading book in use, with which the pupils are expected to be quite familiar. There is, however, no difficulty in accounting for the falling-off of Standard II. in arithmetic. It arose wholly and solely from ignorance of notation. The pupils were required to work, with other sums, one in simple addition, printed in words on a card, and they were often unable to take the sum down correctly on their slates: hence the failure. If the pupils at one time had a sufficient acquaintance with notation, then it is another instance to show that a teacher can never dispense with frequent revision in every branch of his work.

Standard VI., as well as Standard IV., has made considerable advance in grammar, while Standards III. and V. have fallen back. This subject is, on the whole, well understood, and better methods of teaching it are now applied with creditable skill. Composition, taken with grammar, has made very satisfactory progress as far as the structure of sentences is concerned; but very often the exercise is so short as to afford but little opportunity for criticism. The subjects given are always familiar ones, and afford the pupils full scope for essays of reasonable length. The results gained in geography and history are generally better than those of last year. As showing the tendency to confine attention to the contents of the text-book, and to omit all reference to the subject as it affects and concerns us in this new country, I have to state in regard to the history of Standard III. that I have frequently found that the pupils did not know what history they were studying, and, if they did, they often could give no reason why the history of England should be of greater interest to us than that of other countries. A boy said, one day, quite seriously, that it was the history of China that he was studying.

I have to remark regarding reading that, although as a rule it is fluent and accurate, it is still seriously deficient in taste and natural expression. While there are some schools in which the reading is about all that could be reasonably expected, yet there is a large number in which it is nearly altogether wanting in those finer qualities which go to distinguish it as expressive and intelligent. The reason of this deficiency is not far to seek. The attention of the pupils seems to me to be so wholly taken up with the endeavour after verbal accuracy that the meaning expressed by the language read is altogether lost sight of, and hence the false emphasis, the unmusical modulation, and the dead and spiritless rendering of the whole matter. The expression "Cannot see the wood for the trees," altered to "Cannot see the meaning for the words," would pretty accurately apply to the reading that often prevails. It is not pleasant to have to "fail" a pupil when he has read with tolerable accuracy and fluency, but without intelligent expression, and I suspect that