

WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Wellington, 28th March, 1888.

I have the honour to present this year a brief report on the primary schools of the district. The report is brief, because the Board generously gave me leave of absence during the latter half of the year to visit the Old Country. In the early part of the year I examined more than one-half of the schools—that is to say, thirty-five of the smaller outlying country schools—and then, by direction of the Board, I made arrangements whereby the head teachers of the remaining larger schools could examine, towards the end of the year, the work of their schools in the five lower standards. The examination-cards and other tests were prepared by me, and distributed by the Secretary on an appointed day. The arrangement was faithfully carried out, and I am satisfied that the head teachers conscientiously discharged the duties intrusted to them. On my return from England I completed the examination of candidates remaining for Standards VI. and VII. Of course I have not been able to overtake the work of the larger schools in the class and additional subjects. I have revisited most of the larger schools since my return from England, and I am well pleased with the evident desire which has existed among the teachers in charge to keep up the efficiency of their schools. The working energy of the district is unimpaired, and the general condition of the schools was never more satisfactory.

The total number of children presented for examination in 1887 was 9,411, an increase of 575 on the number last year. There were in all sixty-six schools in operation—two more than last year. One is the Otaki School and the other the aided school at Otahuaio. The results of the year in standard work are thus compared with those of last year :—

—	Number of Passes.		Percentage of Passes.		Average Age.	
	1886.	1887.	1886.	1887.	1886. Yrs. mos.	1887. Yrs. mos.
Standard I. ...	1,167	1,171	96	98	8 10	9 0
Standard II. ...	984	1,195	88	90	9 10	10 0
Standard III. ...	872	1,043	74	85	11 4	11 4
Standard IV. ...	574	736	83	84	12 2	12 4
Standard V. ...	318	399	76	78	13 2	13 3
Standard VI. ...	152	177	56	78	14 0	14 2
Total ...	4,067	4,721	83	88	11 6½	11 8½

These figures show an increase of 5 per cent. in the number of children who have passed standards on the number presented; also, the average age is two months higher. These higher numbers are partly accounted for by the fact that many larger schools were examined a month or two later than the ordinary date, and consequently they had more time allowed them for preparation. The difference in the average age is mainly, if not entirely, due to this cause.

For the past three years the total number of children passed in the standard examinations has exceeded 80 per cent. of the number presented; and, when we consider the great differences which exist in the capacities, dispositions, and attendances of children, and the drawbacks to which some schools are from time to time subjected by change of teachers and other causes, the work of the schools, judged by standard passes, must be looked upon as satisfactory.

After seeing many English and Scotch schools in operation I am persuaded that the general character of our schools, as to system, buildings, teachers, management, instruction, and the physique of the children, compares very favourably with that of the Home country.

I am pleased to find that all our larger schools are under good management, and the head teachers, in most instances, have seen long service, and have now the satisfaction of seeing the experience and work of years bringing forth good results. Several of the Wairarapa schools are not at all behind the best of the city schools in general efficiency; and I must again commend the teachers of these schools for the admirable order of their classrooms. In this and in some other respects also I notice this year considerable improvement in the Terrace, Mount Cook Boys', and Newtown Schools; and of the Thorndon School my inspection report this year states that I had never seen that school to better advantage. We also appear to be especially fortunate in having masters who are much above average teachers in some special subjects. In the city alone we have two or three good scientists, two or three good music teachers, and two or three good teachers of drawing. Several of the schools have got up, from time to time, very creditable musical entertainments, which have been much appreciated.

The schools in Class B which were at all weak last year show improved work this year. The school at Otaki is one of good promise, now that it is satisfactorily classified.

The schools in Class C did fairly well this year, except those at Mauriceville and Eketahuna, in which there were changes in the teachers. The Kaitara School did very well this year, and those at Fernridge and Waihekeke have done very creditably for several years past.

The schools under one teacher present the greatest diversity of results, and work under the greatest difficulties. Those at Whiteman's Valley, Tauherenikau, Kaiwairai, Taueru, and Wallaceville showed very poor standard work this year, though the class work at Kaiwairai was good. All in this list, with a percentage of failures not exceeding 20, I consider in a satisfactory condition, and this applies to eighteen out of the twenty-five schools.

There is often some anxiety in the minds of teachers in charge of small schools as to the amount of work expected of them in the syllabus, and sometimes, I think, they attempt too much. Although the programme is extensive, it is largely permissive, and no undue pressure is put upon teachers by me to undertake the teaching of more subjects than is practicable and wise. I am willing to permit any proper grouping of classes in two consecutive standards, and I do not require