

teachers to take up more subjects than fairly meet the syllabus. Some simplification of the syllabus would be looked upon as a boon to small schools, and would lead to better class-teaching of some subjects in large ones. In the meantime, until such change is made, I intend to examine drawing, formal grammar, and geography largely in class, and to do all I can in this direction to ease the difficulties caused by the crowded nature of the syllabus. In standard work I advise teachers to pay special attention to arithmetic, reading with explanation, and composition with good writing and spelling. If I find these subjects well done and the intelligence of the class good, I shall be disposed to view more leniently individual shortcomings in the rest of the standard work.

In all the schools examined by me this year geography was taken *viva voce* in class for Standard III. This may also be done another year in all standards, except that I am unwilling to discontinue map-drawing. It must not be supposed that geography ranks as an important subject, nor do many pupils fail in that subject. Most failures are scored in arithmetic and English (including spelling). I wish once again to call attention to the importance of teachers giving prominence to good reading and writing, the most useful parts of our programme.

I trust the teacher who has the interest of education at heart will never be satisfied with a bare pass in these subjects, but that he will aim at making really good class-teaching in them distinctive features of his school. There is an immense difference between what is an Inspector's minimum for a pass and what is positively good in this work. I am pleased to say that in several schools lately visited for the purpose of examining higher standard work I have commended the teachers for the excellence of the reading and writing. For the first time I have set papers this year in grammar and arithmetic for any pupils who passed Standard VI. a year ago. Owing to the examination being held after Christmas, only a few presented themselves, of whom seven passed—two at the Hutt, two at Mount Cook Girls' School, and three at Masterton.

The infant schools continue to work very satisfactorily. Nowhere have I seen a school for young children better conducted than the Tory Street Infants' School, and nowhere have I seen a building better planned for its purpose. About three-eighths of the total number of children on the books are below Standard I. Now, in towns in which large infant schools are properly organized, children may be well admitted at five years of age. In England the age is three. But, whilst I think five years of age is not too young for the children of the industrial classes to begin school life, I am also of opinion that the school hours for children under seven years of age should be very short. They are now limited in this district to four hours; but I think two hours or two hours and a half, making only one half-day's attendance, would be quite sufficient. Now, if all the children under seven years of age in any school were divided into two sections—upper and lower—and the older children attended the morning classes and the younger attended in the afternoon, I think a desirable change would be made, and one which would be economical and beneficial in many ways. In the first place, it would relieve the buildings very much. In the six large infant schools, representing 1,475 children, less than two-thirds the teaching power would suffice. One or two of them now so much overcrowded would be immediately relieved. The schools under one teacher would much appreciate the time given them for special attention to the higher classes, as in these schools all the pupils under seven might be absent for the same half of the day. I should not be prepared at once to go further than suggest a trial of this plan, as there may be difficulties in practice which might impede its working. On the other hand, it might commend itself very much to the parents of the children, who in that case would see the wisdom of sending their children to school at an early age, and with greater regularity.

After seeing so much of what is done in the course of education in other colonies and in other countries, I am more than ever impressed with the value to this colony of our present system of education, and I feel that it would be a national misfortune if it were suffered to fall into decay. There is at present everywhere throughout this district a keen interest felt in the cause of education; and I hope that the system, as an efficient and comprehensive one, will be fully maintained. To starve it now is to undo the work of the past, and to fall back in the march of progress. I feel sure the good sense of the industrial classes will tell them that a liberal education for their children is the best inheritance they can leave behind them, and that they had better maintain their schools efficiently at any cost than surrender the privilege they now enjoy of seeing their children grow up day by day more rational-minded, more intelligent, better informed, and more humanized.

I have, &c.,

J. R. Blair, Esq., Chairman, Wellington Education Board.

ROBERT LEE.

SUMMARY of RESULTS for the WHOLE DISTRICT.

Standard Classes.			Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.	
									Yrs. mos.
S 7	...	...	11	...	...	...	...	...	...
S 6	...	...	231	2	2	50	177	14	2
S 5	...	...	545	14	21	111	399	13	3
S 4	...	...	942	26	41	139	736	12	4
S 3	...	...	1,340	50	67	180	1,043	11	4
S 2	...	...	1,426	47	56	128	1,195	10	0
S 1	...	...	1,254	36	22	25	1,171	9	0
P.	...	...	3,662	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals			9,411	175	209	633	4,721	*	

* Mean of average age, 11 years 8½ months.