

who have since then been excluded from the Board schools. As shown by the latest attendance returns, there are now over 5,500 children under instruction, and these are scattered over a district for travelling purposes nearly twice the extent of that which had to be traversed in 1878. Notwithstanding the heavy additional work which has been annually thrown upon me by the wonderful increase in the school population of the district, I am pleased to report that every school has been visited at least once during the year, and with a single exception every school was examined in the work of the standards before the midsummer holidays began. The exception was the small subsidised school at Mohaka; and the work at this school would have been finished had not exceedingly bad weather prevented me from reaching it in my overland journey from Poverty Bay to the Wairoa. My examination of the schools, together with the examination of the pupil-teachers, and the special examination of the children in Standards V. and VI. in the month of November, could not have been finished so early had not the plan been adopted of examining papers, and reporting upon the condition of each school, on the same day or days during which the examination took place. My report and the examination results were posted to the Education Office, and duplicate copies were at once made out and sent to each School Committee concerned. I have to compliment those at the office upon the manner in which their portion of the work was carried out.

CHANGES IN DATES OF EXAMINATION.—In order to lessen the press of work which becomes so great towards the close of the school year, it has been found necessary to alter somewhat my old examination arrangements, and I have intimated to a number of the smaller schools my intention of examining them for results in the earlier months of the year, during the period which has hitherto been set aside by me for visits of inspection only.

The number of pupils who were entered on the examination schedules as belonging to the schools at the date of my examinations was 5,221, of whom 3,350, or a little over 64 per cent. of the whole, were presented in standards. The corresponding numbers for the year 1886 were—on the roll, 4,788; presented in standards, 3,113. The following table contains full information as to the numbers presented, examined, excepted, failed, and passed in each standard, in accordance with the departmental regulations. The average age of the pupils for each standard is also given.

Standard Classes.		Number presented.			Absent.	Examined in Standards.			Excepted.	Failed.	Number passed in Standards.			Average Age.	
		M.	F.	Total.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.	Total.	Total.	M.	F.	Total.	Yrs. ms.	
S 7	...	11	6	17	7	60	52	112	...	20	54	38	92	14 3	
S 6	...	55	47	102											
S 5	...	136	147	283	22	122	139	261	1	76	75	100	175	13 2	
S 4	...	245	193	438	11	241	186	427	12	116	149	121	270	12 6	
S 3	...	365	340	705	17	356	332	688	36	154	209	211	420	11 6	
S 2	...	423	419	842	20	411	411	822	29	129	290	294	584	10 4	
S 1	...	498	465	963	32	479	452	931	35	163	324	329	653	8 9	
Preparatory		1,733	1,617	3,350	109	1,669	1,572	3,241	113	658	1,101	1,093	2,194	10 8	
		1,008	863	1,871											
		2,741	2,480	5,221	Pupils attending new schools classed for standards only ...										
												276			

INCREASE IN PRESENTATIONS IN HIGHER STANDARDS.—The increase in the school attendance and in the number of presentations for the year may be regarded as satisfactory; but one of the most encouraging features in connection with the school work is to be found in the increasing number of those who remain for examination above Standard II. I have watched with special interest the increase in the number of standard children in this direction, because to me it is a sure sign that the district schools are gaining ground in public estimation. In the year 1880 there were in the whole district only 198 children, or 12·7 per cent. of those examined for that year, presented in a standard higher than the third, whilst last year 843 pupils, or 25·5 per cent. of those presented in standards, were above the third. But this increase in the number of children in the higher standards is even more satisfactory in another respect, inasmuch as it shows better than any other data that the average duration of the school life of the children throughout the district is showing signs of improvement, though even now the average school life of the children is very much lower than I think it should be. Nothing has surprised me more, when dealing with school returns, than the remarkable fluctuations that take place in the school attendance in the course of a single year. Taking the year under notice as an example, I find that the schools opened in the month of January with a roll number amounting to 4,857 pupils. In the course of the year 3,390 new names were enrolled, making altogether 8,247 children as belonging to the schools for the year, and at the date of sending in the December returns only 5,462 names remained on the school roll. What has become of the 2,784 children who are shown to have left during the year, and were they children from the preparatory classes, or were they the standard children who were withdrawn from school? No doubt many of the "lefts" had only attended school for a short time, but the evidence is only too clear that a large proportion of the children who are annually withdrawn from the schools is made up from the children in the lower standards, and who are far from having received even a fair amount of training. To make this point clear the following facts will suffice: Since the close of 1883 this district has increased its school population by 2,000 children. In that year 532 children were presented for examination in the Second Standard. Had those children remained at school they would have been presented in Standard III. in 1884, in Standard IV. in 1885, and last year