

NORTH CANTERBURY.

Sir,—

Christchurch, 31st March, 1888.

We have the honour to present our report on the schools of the North Canterbury District for the year 1887.

The year opened with considerable arrears of work belonging to the previous series of examinations. These arrears have been substantially made up; but there still remain a few cases in which the annual examination has been postponed beyond the 31st of December, the postponement being due principally to the circumstances of the schools themselves.

The number of schools examined for standard classification is 153, with a roll number of 19,447—an increase of 797 children. Two new schools were not examined. A separate visit of inspection has also been paid to each school, with two or three exceptions.

In fixing the dates of examination, we have sought in every instance to give teachers the longest period of preparation possible: yet the attempt to bring the work within the limits of the departmental regulations has compelled us to take nearly all the schools earlier. Many of those examined in the months of November and December were taken as much as two months before we could expect them to be perfectly ready for reclassification. As regards standard passes, therefore, and no doubt to some extent in other respects also, our schools have been this year placed at a great disadvantage. Yet we have the gratification of recording in the accompanying tables—Tables A and B—a substantial advance on the corresponding results of our last report. In nearly every respect an improvement is shown. On the roll of the standard classes the proportion of absentees has fallen from 6·73 to 5·13; of exceptions, from 5·80 to 4·78; of failures, from 25·51 to 22·60; while the proportion presented in standards has risen from 62·64 to 64·05. The official percentage of passes for the district, estimated on the roll-number of schools examined, is 42·95; and the official percentage of failures, estimated on the standard class-roll, exclusive of absentees and exceptions, is 25·08, which are to be compared respectively with the proportions 38·61 and 29·16 of last year's return. The general result of the class subjects does not appear so favourable, the average percentage on class subjects granted to schools having fallen from 44·6 to 40·93; but it is to be noted that a more rigid system of assigning marks for drawing has been adopted, and the estimate formed for the greater part on the results of special tests rather than as before on general evidence of the attention given to the subject. The slight reduction in the average ages of the children is only an apparent improvement due to the earlier dates of examination.

TABLE A.—PASS SUBJECTS.

Classes.	Number presented.	Number absent.	Number excepted.	Number failed.	Number passed.	Proportion presented per Cent. of total School Roll.	Proportion passed per Cent. of total School Roll.	Number of Schools presenting	Average Age of those that passed.
S 7	82	...	...	...	...	·42	...	28	Yrs. mos.
S 6	389	9	9	89	282	2·00	1·45	82	14 2
S 5	1,103	54	51	401	597	5·67	3·07	126	13 5
S 4	1,960	120	106	619	1,115	10·08	5·73	136	12 5
S 3	3,131	192	197	944	1,798	16·10	9·25	150	11 3
S 2	2,973	141	167	478	2,187	15·29	11·25	152	10 2
S 1	2,818	119	60	265	2,374	14·44	12·21	151	8 11
P	6,991	...	...	...	...	35·95	...	153	...
Totals for 1887	19,447	635	590	2,796	8,353	100·00	42·95	153	11 9†
Corresponding totals for 1886	18,650	782	674	2,964	6,201	100·00	38·61	146*	11 10†

* Normal Model and Normal practising schools reckoned together.

† Mean of average ages.

TABLE B.—PASS SUBJECTS.

Proportions calculated in Percentages.	S6	S5	S4	S3	S2	S1	SS 6-1.
(a) Proportion absent of class roll	2·31	4·90	6·12	6·13	4·74	4·22	5·13
(b) Proportion accepted of class roll	2·31	4·62	5·41	6·29	5·62	2·13	4·78
(c) Proportion failed of class roll	22·88	36·36	31·58	30·15	16·08	9·40	22·60
(d) Proportion passed of class roll	72·49	54·13	56·89	57·43	73·56	84·24	67·50
(e) Proportion failed of the sum of passes and failures	23·99	40·18	35·70	34·43	17·94	10·04	25·08

Taking the proportion of failures in line (e) of the immediately preceding table as probably the fairest standard of comparison for the separate classes, we find that the improvement is general, and notably great in S6; but relatively to each other the classes occupy much the same order of merit. The reversal of the positions of S3 and S4 is the only change, S3 having now a slight advantage, due in part to the improved geography of the previous year, and in part to better ideas of the requirements in grammar and composition. The difference between S2 and S3 is again a striking