

must be borne in mind that there are the strongest reasons against making any material difference in the classes as assembled for instruction and for examination, and that any reasonable principle of promotion from class to class must have as its basis the general capacity of the child and his fitness to undertake higher work. The rule in question, in its strict interpretation, operates with the most harshness in respect of writing and drawing, in which skill or want of skill has little to do with general intelligence, and we regard with alarm the embarrassments of applying to these subjects even the more lenient interpretation, as drawing year by year becomes a pass subject in successively higher standards. Further, the nature of the disparity in the number of pass subjects for the several standards introduces a new difficulty which stands in the way of the application of any common equitable rule of passing, and affects the organization of our schools by unduly swelling the classes preparing for the Third Standard. Our general views on the whole matter of pass and class arrangements are roughly sketched in our replies to the inquiries of the recent Parliamentary Committee on Education (Parliamentary Papers, I.—8, 1887); but we should gladly welcome a change of a much less radical character, whereby the freedom of treatment of which a class subject admits should be accorded to drawing, and whereby the directions to be followed in passing children should assume a more liberal character.

We have, &c.,

L. B. WOOD, M.A.,
W. J. ANDERSON, LL.D.,
GEORGE HOGGEN, M.A.,

The Chairman, North Canterbury Board of Education.

Inspectors.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Timaru, 23rd March, 1888.

I have the honour to present the following report for the year 1887:—

One new school has been opened during the year, making the number of schools in this district forty-nine. I have examined and reported on each school in detail, and paid visits of inspection to all the schools with the exception of the small one at Hakateramea. I have also attended meetings at Arundel, Fairfield, North Waitaki, Beaconsfield, and Hakateramea, to hear and report on the claims of the residents for new schools. The following table will show the general results of the examinations for the year:—

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of Passes on No. examined.	Average Age of those that Passed.
							Yrs. mos.
S 7	45	...	...	...	...	...	...
S 6	149	11	5	34	99	71	14 1
S 5	294	20	12	125	137	50	13 1
S 4	513	33	33	140	307	64	12 8
S 3	764	51	42	210	461	64	11 2
S 2	618	39	34	81	464	80	9 9
S 1	556	34	9	35	478	91	8 7
P	1,566	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals for 1887 ...	4,505	188	135	625	1,946	72	...
Corres. do., 1886	4,365	234	83	621	1,814	72	...

At the date of examination there were 4,505 children on the rolls, which is an increase of 140 for the year. The number of pupils in attendance who had previously passed the Sixth Standard has risen from thirty-two to forty-five; in the six standard classes 2,894 pupils were presented, whereas last year there were 2,752; and the preparatory pupils are fewer by fifteen. Taking the children in the preparatory classes and in Standards I. and II., I find there is a falling-off of eighty-three; but the pupils of the third and higher classes are 233 more than last year. I think this falling-off in the lower classes, and the increased attendance in the higher ones, are results of the depression existing in the colony. The population does not appear to increase much, if at all, and so the lower classes suffer; and, besides, there is not a demand for the services of the older scholars, who are thus getting a longer period of schooling, and in these dull times are being all the better equipped for the good time coming.

Of the 2,894 children in standard classes, 2,706 or 93·6 per cent., were present at examination, leaving a percentage of 6·4 of absentees, against 8·5 for last year. This is a remarkable and gratifying improvement for one year; but the efforts which have brought it about must not be relaxed, for we have a long way to make up in this respect before we can be on equal terms with some other districts.

There are 135 “exceptions” this year, whereas last year the number was eighty-three. This is rather a startling increase, and one of a very unpleasant nature. It points to a very serious irregularity of attendance during the year; and this irregularity is brought out more clearly by the return I have made of those “entitled to exception” in case of failure at the examination: this number is 346, or nearly an eighth of all those presented in the standards. I have not the corresponding number for 1886, but it will be a matter of some interest to observe whether it will rise or fall for the next year.