

good, and slate writing runs through all the stages from very bad to excellent. Better use should be made everywhere of the ball frame, and there should be regular and frequent drill in tables, and on no account should the practice of finger-counting be permitted (I am sorry to say it is sometimes encouraged), as it is one of those bad habits easily prevented, but very difficult to cure.

STANDARD CLASSES AND SUBJECTS.—I reported at considerable length last year on the various subjects of instruction, and I have observed on my visits to the schools that earnest endeavours are being made to remedy the defects that were pointed out and to reach a higher standard of attainment all round. But, however zealous our teachers are, great improvements cannot be looked for in one year, and therefore I do not think it necessary to refer in detail to all the subjects, what I said last year very fairly expressing my opinion of the work as I have found it during the year just closed. We have still a good many schools where it is a little trying to listen to the reading, and I have marked more failures in this subject than I did last year, not because the reading was worse, but because I have made the "intelligence" test somewhat more severe. In some schools the reading falls little short of being excellent. Arithmetic is again the subject in which the greatest weakness is shown. The frequent break-down in the upper standards is largely due to the want of thoroughness and skill in the teaching of the four simple rules. If, for instance, we take simple addition, how often do we find that the boy who can tell straight away that 8 times 7 are 56 hesitates a little over 8 and 7; if we give him 18 and 7 he has some long process to go through before he answers, the same slowness again over 28 and 7, his labour over the terminal 8 and 7 being always the same. Now, if he were drilled in the addition table he should be as ready with 8 and 7 as with 8 times 7, and once he knows 8 and 7 he should with equal readiness tell 18 and 7, 28 and 7, &c. There is nothing new about this way of adding by which a child runs up his columns of figures instead of slowly toiling with finger-counting and other laborious expedients; but I must say that I seldom see it carried into practice. So long as inaccuracy and slowness in the mechanical processes are as common as they are we cannot look for much skill in solving problems. Much time is spent on these during the year, but I think the teachers would be less surprised with the results were they to get their pupils into the habit of exercising their common-sense a little more and in having less trust in rules for everything. The most notable improvement in the grammar of the classes has taken place in the Third Standard; in the other standards it is still far from satisfactory in most of the schools. I have tried, as opportunities offered on my visits to the schools, to point out better methods of dealing with this subject, but it will take some time and much labour to get the children abreast of the requirements of the syllabus. In a fair proportion of the schools I have noticed that attention is given to simple exercises in composition in the Third Standard, the usual practice being to make the children write a few sentences after an object lesson has been given. A few of the teachers have adopted the method set forth in Mr. Park's "First Lessons in English Composition," an excellent little book which I should like to see in the hands of all our teachers, and which they might use with advantage in all the standards. From the way in which I get the essays and letters done in most of the schools it is plain that this subject does not receive the attention and treatment which its importance demands.

Except in six or seven schools the accommodation for the children is sufficient for the present attendance. Some of the older buildings cost a good deal to keep in repair, and in one or two instances it would be advisable to build anew instead of spending more money on patching. The schools are well supplied with furniture and other requisites, and these are generally well looked after.

I have given prominence to some of the weak points in our schools, but I should be doing an injustice to our teachers were I to give the impression that the state of education in this district is unsatisfactory. Very good work has been done in many of our schools, and I am satisfied that the teachers in the Board's service are attentive and faithful in the discharge of their duties.

I have, &c.,

JAS. GIBSON GOW, M.A., Inspector.

The Chairman, South Canterbury Board of Education.

OTAGO.

SIR,—

We have the honour to submit our report for the year 1887. During the year all the schools in the Otago Education District were examined, except three small ones that were opened towards the close of the year; and all but one were visited for inspection. The following table shows at one view the chief statistics of examination for the year:—

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Percentage of Standard Passes.	Average Age of those that Passed.
							Yrs. mos.
Infants ...	8,250	...	...	...	...	...	...
S 1 ...	2,974	72	35	213	2,654	89	9 3
S 2 ...	3,027	95	105	384	2,443	81	9 10
S 3 ...	2,930	90	106	592	2,142	73	11 4
S 4 ...	2,264	71	79	470	1,644	73	12 4
S 5 ...	1,566	70	50	423	1,023	65	13 3
S 6 ...	763	11	15	151	586	77	14 1
Above S 6 ...	212	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	21,986	409	390	2,233	10,492	...	*

Mean of average age, 11 years 8 months.