

1890.
NEW ZEALAND.

EDUCATION: REPORTS OF INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS.

[In continuation of E.—1B, 1889.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

[It has not been thought necessary in all cases to print the tables and those portions of the reports that relate only to particular schools.]

AUCKLAND.

SIR,—

Auckland, 7th February, 1890.

We have the honour to present a report on the schools in the Auckland Education District for the year 1889.

During the year 234 schools have been examined in standards. There have been 114 inspection reports presented; of these, twenty-seven relate to schools which were examined and inspected on the same day. Thirteen schools have been specially reported as unsatisfactory.

The tabulated statement required by the Education Department is attached to this report. This statement shows that the percentage of passes has increased from 43·8 to 45·1, and that of failures has decreased from 21·4 to 19. The mean of the average age of passing is somewhat lower than last year. While an improvement is thus shown on the whole, we find that the work in Standard IV. and Standard VI. shows signs of deterioration.

Owing to circumstances with which the Board is already acquainted, it has been found impossible to visit the schools in the Bay of Plenty district. There are also a few small schools to which no visit, either of inspection or examination, has been paid during the year.

The recent action of the Board in sending to take charge of country schools female teachers who have already had experience in the town and larger schools, has been attended with good results. We believe that female teachers are specially fitted for this work, and we take this opportunity of bearing testimony to the care, zeal, and intelligence with which some of these schools are taught when under the control of ladies.

With regard to the syllabus prescribed by the regulations, about which there has been much discussion, we are of opinion that frequent changes in the programme of instruction should be avoided. At the same time, we fully recognise the difficulties under which teachers and scholars labour in small and half-time schools. The regulations make no special provision for schools of this class, and it appears somewhat inconsistent to expect the full requirements of the syllabus to be carried out to the same extent in small schools as in a large one. The attempt to carry out the syllabus in its entirety frequently results in nothing being well done. We therefore consider that the most judicious alteration would be in the direction of giving the Inspectors discretionary power to allow the omission of some of the class and additional subjects.

With regard to the several subjects of instruction we beg to offer the following remarks:—

READING.—Instances of really good reading are few and far between. The principal defects are want of expression and inflection. While fair reading, as regards pronunciation and attention to stops, is found in the lower classes, in the higher classes a want of appreciation of the meaning of the passage read, as well as a very meagre knowledge of the meaning of words not in ordinary use, is very common.

WRITING.—The reputation for good handwriting which this district has in former years enjoyed is likely to be somewhat endangered unless more care is given to the subject. The writing is certainly not so good as it was. We attribute this to the want of vigilance during the writing lesson, and to the fact that careless writing in exercise books is taken as a matter of course by some teachers.

SPELLING.—More failures have been caused during the past year by bad spelling than by any other subject. Not only in the special test imposed, but also in composition papers and exercise books, even common and easy words are frequently misspelt. Although frequent reference has been made in previous reports to the want of care shown in the correction of transcription exercises, undoubtedly the best and readiest means of teaching spelling, yet we have been unable to see any improvement.