

dates to come forward for these examinations. A large majority of the successful candidates of past years by no means represent the scholars in the standards which qualify for the examination.

Several applications for new schools have been before the Board during the year, and, as this question is yearly requiring greater need for the fullest consideration, I desire to draw attention to one or more points relative to the subject. Already a decrease in the attendance at a few of the old-established schools, whose position when erected suited the isolated settlement of the time, is beginning to show itself. This, I believe, will ultimately lead to the removal of one or more of these buildings to other sites now more centrally and conveniently situated. Unfortunately there is also a tendency among parents to withdraw pupils to other schools recently erected or proposed for erection, as is seen in the names of settlers appearing on several petitions for new schools in different but contiguous districts. In localities where a few children reside at a distance from schools in operation it is desirable that better provision should be made for their entry on school life at as early a date as the means of the Board can allow. And, further, I suggest, as a preliminary step in some cases, the introduction of the aided school to supply this want before the creation of new districts and erection of schools therein. Such schools have been for years working in a most satisfactory manner in various education districts throughout the colony. Certainly, it is true that their introduction would entail some little monetary contribution from the settlers in aiding the capitation allowance (which could further be assisted by the Board to a slight extent), but the advantage of having a school at work in the district would more than repay the trifling personal effort.

At present accommodation is, with two exceptions, very satisfactory. The two are Okato and Waiongona. Both buildings are much overcrowded and ill adapted. Should the attendance continue new buildings appear to be the only remedy; meanwhile the children suffer, though it is satisfactory to know that the school work has been carried on without serious inconvenience. Although there is ample room at Courtenay Street, the isolation of the infant department affects the working and organization of the Central School. I hope the Board will not lose sight of the importance of having both departments of the school under the same roof. The changes now being undertaken at Waitara will lead to far better and more satisfactory conditions at that place. This has proved to be the case at Inglewood, where similar changes were made a few years ago. While referring to this subject I entreat for the consideration and grant of a liberal increase in the salaries of the assistants engaged in these schools. Satisfactory results can only be obtained in large schools when important trusts are committed to competent and experienced persons.

The class of buildings now erected at Oaonui, Tarata, Eltham Road, and other places meets with general approval from teachers and the public. In every case ample provision is made for future enlargement at a minimum of expense. These buildings are commodious, well arranged, and successfully ventilated. Several of the school grounds in different parts of the district are tidily kept and well looked after by the School Committees; and teachers also have contributed by labour and money to make or improve the gardens attached to their residences. At one I was shown a model beehive which could be taken into the school for object lessons, when the imprisoned bees could be seen at their busy work without dread or injury to the youngest child. Still, there are teachers who take little or no interest in the improvement of their surroundings; likewise a few allow this indulgence to extend to their dress, which disposition, I am, sorry to say, has been forced upon my observation by a like inclination amongst their pupils.

The mean of ages for the district is slightly raised—from 12·2 to 12·3; but the advanced ages at which a considerable number of children enter school, especially in new districts, is to a great extent one of the chief causes of this increase. I call attention to the fact that I have, in a few cases, passed children through the lowest standard at ages between fourteen and fifteen years. The ages at which children are passing the standards in the best schools of the district will, however, on an examination of Table 3, be seen to be lower than in former years.

For examination 2,553 scholars were presented, of which number 994 were classed as preparatory. Both the absent and the excepted numbers are slightly in excess of last year's return. The failures and passes are improved. The "percentage of failures" is 25·4; but the "percentage of passes" shows a slight fall—to 39·1. The latter is caused by the increased number in the preparatory classes, and the lesser number than usual presented in Standard I. The actual number of passes is 999, or 25 more than that of the preceding year. Deducting 248, the number of passes in the Central and West Infants' Schools, gives an increase of 61 passes to be credited to the country schools. I give this information because the Central School returns have been lowered by the indifferent results of one class and the partial failure of another; otherwise the school would have returned a greater number of passes than at any former examination.

Class subjects show improvement to the extent of 5 per cent. They are, in general, liberally treated. Drawing for the first time in Standard V. has received fair treatment. Evidently teachers are realising the advantage of early preparation and practice of methods. I now entertain hopes that in this standard more than satisfactory work will be done during the present year, when the subject will be treated as a pass one. I wish a similar assurance could be expressed regarding Standard VI. The schools are but poorly equipped with apparatus for teaching advanced drawing. The cost of good models and objects is altogether beyond the yearly allowance made for apparatus in this district. Still, this difficulty could be got over if the Education Department supplied all necessary apparatus for drawing and science teaching at a price which it could be sold for by importing largely. Many teachers would purchase for themselves but that the high prices, owing to heavy charges on such unsaleable goods, prevent tradesmen keeping them in stock.

The percentage on additional subjects is about 2 per cent. lower. I attribute the falling off to the treatment of recitation, which was poorer than usual, and rather uneven; also to the lower marks awarded for sewing, almost every reduction being made in schools relying on outside aid for