

a great improvement in their working condition has been made in the past year. The result thus appears:—

				Progressive.		Stationary.		Declining.		Total.
1888	...	...	...	22	...	29	...	20	...	71
1889	...	...	...	34	...	27	...	11	...	72

Of the eleven weak schools ten made more than 25 per cent. of failures, and the work of the other was of an exceptional character. The weak schools include two with about 100 pupils each, three with from 60 to 70, and six small ones. All the city schools, and most of the large ones in the country, are more or less in a satisfactory condition; and the work of eight out of the ten largest in Class A, Appendix [table not reprinted], is decidedly of a progressive order.

The class work of the year presents several new features. A programme has been issued in four branches of elementary science—chemistry, physics, physiology, and botany; and many schools have begun to work more systematically in one or more branches of the syllabus. I hope soon to see every school well provided with necessary apparatus and illustration where such are not at present provided.

Another feature of the year is the introduction of modelling in clay by classes in infant departments. I am much pleased with what has been done in the Mount Cook Infants' School and in a few other schools, and I hope to find another year that this work is more generally taken up in all preparatory classes.

Geometrical drawing was required for the first time in Standard IV.; and it is delightful to find that practical geometry is a popular and interesting subject with both teachers and scholars. The work has been satisfactorily taken up, and generally by Standards V., VI., and the class above Standard VI., as well. The higher standards of the large schools are for the most part much ahead of the syllabus, and have done a great deal of work in advanced freehand, scale drawing, and drawing from objects.

This year, also, for the first time all the upper standard needlework of the girls in the city schools was brought together in the Willis Street School, and examined by a committee of ladies chosen by the several School Committees. They report that the work generally is good, that of the Mount Cook Girls' School on the whole being the best. But the work of Standard V. in this school was pronounced better than that of the higher classes, some garments being exceedingly well made. The Terrace School specimens of work sent in, and the knitting of the Te Aro School were commended. The Committee suggest that all darning should be on white material.

Another feature of the year is the increased importance given to mental work in arithmetic; and the examination was made orally instead of by questions written on the blackboard. Several new school libraries have been started this year; and I observe with satisfaction a first attempt made in the Te Aro School to substitute a more rational elementary science syllabus in junior classes for the more commonplace object-lesson work, which is seldom philosophically treated.

The introduction of Swedish drill, and the more extended use of Indian clubs, by the drill instructor, M. de Mey, have been attended with commendable results.

The best schools produced excellent class work this year in certain classes. Many large standard classes passed very creditably, and some without a single failure. I am impressed with the fact that more of the class-teachers are aiming at a higher standard of excellence in their work, and it must be gratifying to many of them to find that their efforts have been crowned with success. On this point, however, I may observe that a teacher of fair average ability, who is thoughtful and painstaking, never fails to produce fairly satisfactory work. From adverse circumstances there may come, once in a way, a bad year; but such a teacher will never suffer disaster. As for an Inspector giving a bad result to a deserving teacher under the present system, it is simply impossible, the examination tests being uniform and evenly applied in all schools alike.

I have now to point out a few defects. It is important that more attention should be paid in many cases to neatness in written work and to the cultivation of more legible handwriting. In too many cases the letters are not round and bold enough to be legible, and the words are generally too close together.

Mental arithmetic is of greater value than many teachers give to it; and I believe one great means of success in teaching arithmetic is to obtain facility in dealing with numbers mentally, before rules are dealt with.

The children who are passing in large numbers from the city infants' schools into the main schools are not sufficiently well grounded in reading; and I think much more time and attention should be given in these schools to the teaching intelligently of fluent and expressive reading. One cause of the weakness is that the books used are nearly always too difficult; and little children are groping in a Standard I. reader who cannot read in a primer with anything like ease and expression, and they are unable to get along in the easiest unseen narrative. Another cause is the want of time given for sufficient practice on the part of each pupil. Almost every alternate lesson in an infants' department should be a reading lesson in one form or another.

I have ascertained that there are 903 children who, having passed a standard last year, have left school during the year without remaining to pass the next higher standard. Of this number 57 had passed an examination in a class above Standard VI., 142 had passed Standard VI., 209 Standard V., 181 Standard IV., 158 Standard III., 70 Standard II., and 96 Standard I. It is only an approximate return, as some children come and go from one district to another. Still, the return fairly shows the output of the schools; and, in round numbers, it may be said that of 900 standard children who leave school in the year, 400 remained long enough to pass Standards V., or VI., but there are 320 who leave before they have passed Standard IV. This, of course, is unsatisfactory so far as the 320 are concerned; but there is something very satisfactory and promising in the general outlook.