

HAWKE'S BAY.

SIR,—

Education Office, Napier, 31st January, 1890.

I have the honour to submit to you a summary report on the condition of the public schools in this education district for the year ending 31st December, 1889. At the close of the year 47 schools, containing 5,991 pupils, were in operation, with an average attendance amounting to 4,850. The teaching staff consisted of 47 head teachers, 42 assistants, and 63 pupil-teachers. Sixty-six teachers hold certificates of competency from the Government, and eight have what is known as a "partial pass," which means that they have passed in some portion of the subjects required for the Class E certificate. Nine of the teachers having charge of schools do not yet hold certificates of competency from the Government.

ACCOMMODATION.—The school accommodation, including the buildings that are hired by the Board, is estimated at 50,900 square feet, which, if equally distributed over the district according to the school attendance, would be sufficient for 5,090 children. This, however, it would be impossible to do, as the varying conditions of population may sometimes cause an excess of school places in one or more districts. In going over the list of schools, I find that there is ample accommodation in all the smaller districts where buildings have been erected by the Board. Of the remaining schools, eight of them have their full complement of pupils, and fifteen others have to hire rooms, or occupy buildings that are too small for the present attendance. The school additions which were carried out at Woodville, Makatoku, Napier, Port Ahuriri, and Danevirke in the early part of the year have proved of much service to those districts; but, as will be pointed out further on, the work in several cases was sadly thrown back, just as it is now at Matamau, Makauri, Kumeroa, and Patutahi, where the need of accommodation is urgent, and as it would have been at Napier and Gisborne had not hired rooms for school purposes been obtainable in those places. The state of the older school buildings is fair considering that so little has been done for years past to keep them in anything like repair. The policy so closely allied to "Penny wise and pound foolish" has so long been adopted with respect to these and to the residences that I marvel so few repairs are really urgent. The buildings that have been erected within the last five years are in very good order and repair, and their internal arrangements are a great improvement on those found in the earlier buildings erected by the Board. The separation of class rooms by wide divisional passages, the sloping floor for desks in place of the raised tiers, and the erection of separate play-sheds provide conveniences which add greatly to effective discipline and management. As for the teachers' residences, the few provided are mostly too small for their occupants, and in cases where teachers have to hire houses they find it a difficult matter in the country districts to obtain proper accommodation within walking distance of their schools. Some of the teachers in consequence suffer hardships and undergo privations which ought not to be permitted to exist among a body of men engaged in the work of education. The schools at Kumeroa, Maunga-atua, Ashley Clinton, Matamau, Te Onga Onga, Blackburn, Napier, Frasertown, Ormond, Patutahi, Makauri, and Te Karaka are each without a residence, and some of those belonging to the Board require either to be enlarged or repaired.

INSPECTION AND EXAMINATION.—During the year all the schools were duly inspected and examined according to regulation, and a report was sent to each Committee concerned, referring in detail to the condition of the school under its control. The examination of the pupil-teachers and of the Gisborne District High School took place in the middle of December, but the marking of the papers was not concluded until early in January, in consequence of other pressing duties requiring my attention. In my last year's report reference was made to a change which it had been found necessary to make in the date of the standard examination of certain schools. Most of the schools in the southern part of the district are now examined in March and April, and I am inclined to think it would be advantageous to all concerned if the examination in standards of all the schools to the south of Waipukurau could be arranged to take place about the same period of the year. The number of pupils whose names were entered on the examination schedules, and returned as attending school at the date of the standard examination, was 5,691, or 114 more than were returned as attending for the corresponding period of the previous year. The presentations in standards, however, were only six more than in 1888. The table appended gives in a concise form the number of children presented, passed, and failed in the standards for the year under notice. The corresponding numbers for the previous year were: On the roll, 5,577; absent, 118; excepted, 147; failed, 889; passed, 2,566.

Put in the form of percentages, the standard results of the year were—(a) Presented in standards, 3,739, or 65·7 per cent. of the roll number; (b) passed in proportion to the presentations, 2,867, or 76·5 per cent.; (c) passed in proportion to the whole number attending school, 50·3 per cent.; (d) proportion of pupils in the preparatory classes, 1,952, or 34·3 per cent.

A comparison of the standard results in the table [not reprinted] which is appended to this report presents some curious facts well worthy of careful consideration. Of the forty-seven schools in the district seven of them obtained 60 per cent. or more of passes in the standard examination, twelve obtained passes varying between 50 and 60 per cent., eleven others passed between 40 and 50 per cent., and seventeen fell below 40 per cent., two of them falling even as low as 23 per cent. In the class subjects also the same table shows a wide range in the relative efficiency of the schools in the same subjects of examination. One school only reached above the mark "Good," ten schools varied in marks between "Very fair" and "Good," fifteen between "Fair" and "Very fair," and twenty-one schools failed to obtain the mark "Fair," which in the standard examination is the mark required to qualify for a pass. Although these facts may appear to some as presenting a not very satisfactory state of affairs, I am of the opinion that they are very encouraging, and promise well for the future, and show that, notwithstanding the vast amount of work to be done in the pass and class subjects under the regulations, fair headway has been made by most of the schools, and very commendable by a few.