

those Committees where the members interest themselves in the welfare of the schools in their respective districts. They certainly occasion at times a little friction in the educational machinery, but this is only a passing weakness, such as may be anticipated in all new schemes of government, and which experience will set right. Hundreds of pounds outside of the ordinary grants made by the Board are annually collected by Committees throughout this education district to carry out improvements to the school buildings and their surroundings, and altogether it may be said that they form an important lever in the work of education.

CHARACTER OF PREPARATORY WORK.—With regard to the general character of the preparatory work, it is pleasing to find such a fine tone existing in a growing number of the junior departments, where all the work of the preparatory classes is done. In previous reports reference was made to the improved character of the teaching, and to the earnestness, and I might say to the steadfastness, of the teachers in charge of those classes. Good manners and good behaviour are to be found in the majority of departments, and the demand for higher attainments has been met in the most cheerful manner by those lady teachers who have in their hands the making or marring of the higher instruction of the schools. In a number of cases the results were equal to my most sanguine expectations, and I am able to report that the infant departments at Napier, Gisborne, Hastings, Waipukurau, Waipawa, Matawhero, Danevirke, are in admirable working order, whilst others like Norsewood, Woodville, Port Ahuriri, Napier (Hastings Street), Clive, Meanee, Wairoa, and Taradale are promising well for the future. The rooms occupied by the preparatory classes are made cheerful and attractive by means of telling pictures, and the appliances for teaching are specially adapted to the wants of young children. No definite syllabus of instruction is authorised for the departments, but the teaching nevertheless is systematic and intelligent, and is based on a course which each teacher prepares at the beginning of the school year. During the year a new form of instruction has been introduced into the Gisborne, Napier, and Waipawa preparatory classes, which I hope to see adopted shortly in every school in my district. I refer to the use of scissors for cutting out shapes similar to those which are found in the drawing books. In reality the “cutting out” and drawing lessons have been amalgamated, one-half of the class using scissors to cut out the figure which is drawn by the teacher upon the blackboard, whilst the other children draw the figure in their books. The process is reversed when the next drawing and “cutting out” lesson comes round, the drawing pupils taking the places of the “cutting out” pupils of the day before, and *vice versa*. Although this form of instruction has only been introduced, at my special desire, about eight months, its success is very marked, and no other lesson, the mistress of the Gisborne School informed me, is more popular with the children. I was very much struck with the intelligence displayed by the pupils in the upper preparatory class at this school, who were delighted to show me how to change in a few minutes, and with scientific accuracy, any piece of paper into an oblong, a square, an equilateral triangle, a right-angled triangle, and a circle, and could cut out the shapes of pinafores with rapidity and good finish, such as would astonish many mothers of families. Now that drawing is made to occupy such a prominent place in the work of the schools, I hope to see this form of instruction fully developed, and made compulsory for all the pupils in the lower departments.

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE.—The table to which reference has several times been made already, contains my summary as to the condition of the schools, under the heading “Order and Discipline.” In that table six schools have gained the mark “Excellent,” and twenty-two others are classed between “Excellent” and “Good.” This may be set down as satisfactory; but it seems to me that teachers do not pay sufficient attention to physical training. At play time it is seldom one sees a teacher among the children playing at their games and influencing them in those forms of competition which are the prelude to the higher competition in the business of life. A good gymnast, cricketer, or drill, or, indeed, one fond of games of any kind, will soon make his influence felt for good in the playground; and to me it is distressing, as one visits the schools, to find gymnastic apparatus out of order, calisthenic rods unused, and indifference manifested such as marks out those who deem a “standard pass” the only element worthy of attention in the bringing up of children. Gisborne, Waipawa, and Waipukurau stand out pre-eminent among the schools for the excellence of their calisthenic, gymnastic, or military training.

SCHOOL RECORDS.—I have little to complain of with regard to the way in which the school records are kept, the class, admission, and summary registers being in most cases neatly and correctly entered as required by the rules laid down. The standard lesson books which the Board requires to be kept in each school were spoken of approvingly by the principal teachers, and, although there is some little trouble attached to keeping them, I find the pupil-teachers have come to look upon them as indispensable for systematic teaching, and they were certainly kept by the teachers of Napier, Port Ahuriri, Waipawa, Waipukurau, Hastings, and Wairoa schools in a most exemplary manner. It is difficult to test whether the standard pass cards are annually entered up in the case of those pupils who pass the annual examination, but I have no reason to suppose that the duty of entering the passes is overlooked by any of the teachers who are responsible for this work.

The general condition and efficiency of the schools throughout the district will be gathered from the following brief description of the work in each county. [Not reprinted.]

I have, &c.,

The Chairman, Board of Education, Napier.

H. HILL, Inspector of Schools.