Hatter's, Maori Gully, Richardson, Ngahere, and Red Jack's had none absent; Kynnersley, Orwell Creek, Totara Flat, and Greenstone had each one absentee; Marsden, Dunganville, and Westbrook had two each; Ahaura, Notown, and Cobden three; and Paroa seven.

The percentage of promotions shows a reduction generally—on roll number of school, 4·9 per cent.; on roll number of standard classes, 7·6 per cent.; and on number present in standard classes, 5·5 per cent. This would appear to indicate a general falling-off in results; but it is not so, the cause being found more in the specially poor results of a few schools. In no previous year have so many of the schools done such thoroughly good work; but the appearance of the largest school in the district amongst the weak division has a serious effect upon the general result. Excepting in geography there is a decided improvement in all the class subjects.

Drawing is generally very well taught; and history and science exhibit a very pronounced advance. This is no doubt attributable to some extent to the introduction of the History and Science Readers, but in a greater degree to the more practical nature of the teaching.

In additional subjects there is a very marked improvement, the mean percentage of marks being 75, as against 45 for the previous year. History was omitted in nine schools, science and object-lessons in nine, drill and exercise in twelve, singing in fourteen, needlework in seven. In a few cases there are acceptable reasons for the omissions.

Needlework is taught in all schools having a female teacher or assistant.

On the whole the work of the district reaches a good standard. It is satisfactory to find that the teaching of science is extending, and that the manner of its teaching is improving.

I found ample proof that the references to certain defects made in my last year's report had been carefully noted by the teachers, a great improvement being perceptible in some respects. Classes I. and II. are generally well and carefully taught, the two principal mistakes made being of a widely different character. The scholars are sometimes allowed to read too long in one book, with the result of their getting the subject-matter committed to memory. The introduction of a strange book by the examiner then produces trouble. Again, I sometimes found them trying to read in the First Book before the Primer had been mastered. In teaching notation and numeration to these classes illustrative material should be more generally used. Mental arithmetic had received attention in a few schools with marked effect upon the general work. It is claimed for arithmetic that, apart from its practical use in the every-day affairs of life, it is valuable for the general development of the intellect; but when it is taught in a purely mechanical manner I question if it has not a deadening and weakening effect upon the mind. If, in all cases, thorough mental practice were to precede slate work, beginning with the simplest possible illustrations of a rule, we should have less of that inability to comprehend a question which lies at the root of most of the failures in arithmetic.

It may have happened that a small extra percentage of failure was caused in Standards V. and VI. by my requiring the work to be done on paper, instead of the slate as hitherto. As, however, those classes in some schools do not appear to have been in the slightest degree affected by the change this can hardly be accepted as an excuse. Indeed, I think it very desirable that the upper classes should be weaned from the use of the slate as much as possible before leaving school, for, a mistake on the slate being easily corrected, there is encouragement to carelessness. It appears hardly necessary to point out that if arithmetic is to assist in development of brain power it must be as a mental process; but it is quite usual to find a higher class fairly expert at processes on slate, and yet, when deprived of slate and pencil, bungling over an extremely simple problem. In the lower classes more attention should be paid to neatness of arrangement on slate. In some cases the work was good as to quality, but disfigured by want of orderly arrangement and care in making figures.

The writing is on the whole improving throughout the district, and in the great majority of the schools close attention is paid to the condition of the copybooks. I should like to see the system of teaching this subject lately introduced into the Greymouth School adopted generally in the district. Every scholar in the class writes the same copy, and the mistakes are exhibited and corrected on the blackboard. This is the only intelligent and efficient system, especially for large classes. Though irregular attendance may cause blank spaces in the copybooks, leading to protests from parents economically disposed, I would strongly urge the adoption of the blackboard lesson.

Spelling has improved, especially in the lower classes.

Composition in some schools was very well done; but in the majority there is still room for improvement. The defects referred to in my last report are still apparent, though they are not so general. There is a tendency, I think, to overestimate the pupils' capabilities. The exercises for Standards III. and IV. should be confined to simple narrations of facts and occurrences, and for Standards V. and VI. the same, with the addition of the reproduction of some interesting story or narrative. The larger schools should have a small library of interesting books for the use of the upper classes. Extracts from these, reproduced by the scholars after reading, with correction and criticism upon the blackboard, would make excellent practice.

Geography is the least satisfactory subject. This may be partly explained by the introduction of new books at a late period of the year.

Physical geography appears to receive little attention, excepting in a few of the best schools.

Map-drawing needs improvement, the location of places being too often defective. The position relative to other countries is seldom shown; and the adjacent seas and oceans are often omitted.

During the year Geographical, History, and Science Readers were introduced for the purpose of giving more practice in reading, and of inducing a more scientific treatment of the subjects mentioned. These books are principally valuable, not as containing all that a scholar should know of the subject, but as indicating the method of teaching to be adopted. Teachers who use them by giving pages of matter as home lessons to be committed to memory do not yet understand their