

During the year we have had reason to suspect that teachers sometimes use influence with the parents of backward children to keep them away from school on the day of examination. In more than one case it has been proved that this has been done, and there is grave reason for believing that it has happened to a small extent in a good many more. At the same time the evil cannot be common, for of the 14,173 pupils entered for examination in the standards only 325 were absent. If pupils are withheld in this way the parents are quite as much to blame as the teachers, and they should share with the latter the reprobation with which such conduct is visited. It would be well if head teachers would procure from the parents and submit to the Inspector a signed statement acknowledging, and perhaps also accounting for, the absence of their children. This simple expedient would clear them from all suspicion of complicity in fraud, by throwing the responsibility on the parents. There has also been some trouble about promoting pupils who have failed to pass at the standard examination. We notice with regret that it is becoming more common for teachers to keep back all who have not passed their standard. The motive for this is doubtless to evade the responsibility of deciding which of those who fail should be promoted and which should be kept back. This responsibility should certainly be undertaken by the teachers, for they must know much more about the attainments of their pupils than an Inspector can, and they should be prepared to act on their superior knowledge. Every one knows that a good pupil sometimes fails to pass, while an indifferent one manages to pull through; and, this being unavoidable with a single test, the result of that one test should not override the judgment of the teacher, founded on his more ample knowledge of the pupils' attainments.

There has been considerable improvement of late years in the instruction of pupil-teachers, and the results of the last examination were in many respects highly satisfactory. We are glad to find that very few are now dismissed for want of progress in their studies. The order, behaviour, and manners of the pupils attending the schools continue to be as satisfactory as heretofore. We have much pleasure in bearing testimony to the great earnestness and attention with which the teachers as a body discharge their responsible and weighty duties. Many of those who fail to give the satisfaction we could desire cannot trace their failure to indolence or want of zeal, and with growing skill they may hope to see their efforts ultimately rewarded by substantial success.

We have, &c.,

D. PETRIE, }
W. TAYLOR, } Inspectors.
P. GOYEN, }

The Secretary, Otago Education Board.

SOUTHLAND.

SIR,—

Education Office, Invercargill, 20th March, 1890.

We have the honour to submit our report for the year 1889.

During the year we examined, either singly or conjointly, one hundred and two schools. Sixty schools were also inspected by us. Nearly six weeks were occupied in preparing papers for the pupil-teacher and scholarship examinations, and thereafter assessing the same. A considerable proportion of time was spent in the preparation of test-cards and in the compilation of various official reports. The following schools—viz., Oteramika Gorge, Glenorchy, Waikawa, Greenhills, and Springhills—were opened during the year, and were not examined. Mataura and Mabel were twice examined, so as to make their time of examination agree with that of other groups with which they would naturally be taken. Hedgehope was closed at the date on which it should have been examined, and had to be held over accordingly. The following is a summary of results for the whole district:—

Standard Classes.	Presented.	Absent.	Excepted.	Failed.	Passed.	Average Age of those that passed.
						Yrs. Mos.
Above Standard VI. ...	39	...	...	...	...	...
Standard VI. ...	190	8	9	30	143	14 6
" V. ...	484	12	34	175	263	13 8
" IV. ...	779	20	36	163	560	12 8
" III. ...	1,311	56	89	302	864	11 7
" II. ...	1,185	37	57	51	1,040	10 6
" I. ...	1,113	29	24	52	1,008	9 4
Preparatory ...	3,062	...	...	...	...	...
Totals ...	8,163	162	249	773	3,878	*

* Mean of average age, 12 years.

As compared with last year, the total number presented has increased from 7,587 to 8,163, and the number presented in standards from 4,462 to 5,062. The percentage of failures has fallen from 18 to 17, and the percentage of absentees in standard classes from 4 to 3. A substantial increase in the number of pupils presented for examination in the higher standards has again to be noted.

The impression derived from a general survey of the year's work is that the state of education in the district is, on the whole, satisfactory. Indeed, considering the weight of the syllabus and the adverse circumstances to which many teachers are exposed, the amount and quality of work done are in some instances little less than marvellous. Such success implies enthusiasm in teachers and scholars alike, and in a number of schools it is gratifying to find, on the part of both, abundant